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BY THE REV.

JAMES STALKER D. D.

Author of "The Life of Jesus Christ," "The Life of St. Paul," "Imago Christi," etc.

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PREFACE

WHEN in America last year, delivering the Yale Lectures on Preaching, I preached "The Four Men" on Sunday morning, April 12, in the chapel of Yale University. Mr. D. L. Moody, the evangelist, who chanced to be present, insisted on its being printed, and he sent copies, I believe, to all the students of the University. In the same irresistible way, he got me to publish "Temptation" and "Conscience," which were given as talks to the students in his own institutions at Northfield. As these have been circulated with some degree of acceptance, I have consented to the issue of this larger collection.

The way in which this book has come together has precluded any attempt at systematic teaching. My sole endeavor has been to handle a few important themes of faith and conduct in a way that may be found instructive and readable, particularly by young men.

GLASGOW,
October 3rd, 1892.

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CONSCIENCE

"A Good Conscience."—1 Tim. i. 19.

I

CONSCIENCE

WE DIVIDE men according to the intellect. We say of this man that he is clever, and of that one that he is stupid; of one woman that she is brilliant, and of another that she is dull; and we esteem or disdain them accordingly. But there is a more discriminating distinction. Intellect is not the deepest thing in man: conscience is deeper. The greatest philosopher of modern times—one who knew well what is in man—said, that in the universe there were two things which filled him with awe: one was the starry heaven at night, and the other the conscience in the human breast. At the day of judgment, when men will be separated from one another, that which will determine who are fit to survive as the select of the human race, and who are to be cast away, will not be the

possession of intellect, but obedience to conscience.

I. WHAT CONSCIENCE IS.

The conscience is a faculty which discharges several important functions; let us discriminate them carefully, and observe how they supplement each other.

1. *It is a sense whereby we distinguish between right and wrong.*

Just as by the sense of sight we distinguish black from white, and by the sense of touch distinguish what is cold from what is hot, so by this inner sense we distinguish what is right from what is wrong. When we are about to act we see before us two ways, between which we have to choose. The one is right and the other wrong; and it is consience that informs us which is which.

2. *Conscience is an authority commanding us to choosc the right and refuse the wrong.* It not only declares in the indicative mood, as we stand at the parting of the ways, that this

is the right path and that the wrong, but it also tells us, in the imperative mood, to select the one and reject the other. It does so with supreme authority. There may be within us at the same moment other feelings roused by the same objects, and they may urge us to adopt the opposite course to that dictated by conscience; but, however numerous and loud their voices may be, that of conscience is sovereign above them all. For example, there may be lying before a man's eyes something that awakens in his nature a violent craving. Say, it is the intoxicating cup before a drunkard: it is a strong temptation; it awakens a perfect tempest of desire; yet above the tumult the still small voice of conscience is heard, and, whether it is obeyed or not, the man knows that he ought to do as it directs. Conscience sits on the throne and bears the sceptre; and the appetites and passions of the soul are its subjects. They may rebel against its sovereignty; but, if they do, they know that they are rebels. As Bishop Butler, the classical English writer on this

subject, says: "Had it strength as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."

3. Conscience is a judge approving and rewarding us if we do right, and condemning and punishing if we do wrong.

Although conscience, in the first place, tells us, as we stand at the parting of the ways, that this is the right path and that the wrong, and, secondly, commands us to choose the one path and avoid the other, it does not follow that its command is obeyed. It may be; or, on the contrary, sloth and selfishness may keep us back from doing what conscience is urging, or passion may take possession of us, and hurry us along the path which conscience has forbidden. But, as soon as the decision is formed and the step taken one way or the other, conscience immediately performs a third function, either approving us if we have chosen according to its dictates or condemning us if we have not. Nor has it only the power of passing sentence, but it

forthwith executes it as well, rewarding or punishing as the case may be.

Who does not know the glow of delight which overspreads the soul when duty has been done? To take a simple instance: suppose there is a piece of work you have been neglecting—say, the writing of a letter to a friend abroad—your conscience has been upbraiding you for the delay; but from week to week, and month to month, it has been put off for one excuse or another, till it has become a kind of haunting nightmare. At last, however, in obedience to the inward monitor, you take it in hand, stick to it, and finish it. Is there not then an exultant satisfaction as you exclaim, There, it is done at last? This is the reward which conscience gives for obedience to its commands. On the other hand, if the wrong decision is come to and the wrong step taken, conscience lashes the soul with the whip of retribution. For a time, indeed, the gratification of appetite may so occupy the soul that conscience is forgotten. But its turn comes. Who does not know the

sweetness of the cup of sinful gratification and the sting of the adder which fastens on the lip at the dregs?

This is a strange and solemn power which conscience wields. In your secret soul you commit a sin: it is a mere passing thought perhaps; no human eye has seen it, no tongue will ever speak of it: yet even in the dark you blush at it; you are degraded in you own eyes; you feel guilty and wretched. And this guilty wretchedness does not pass away; it may at any time revive. Conscience comes to us in lonely hours; it wakens us in the night; it stands at the side of the bed and says, Come, wake up and listen to me! And there it holds us with its remorseless eye; and buried sins rise out of the grave of the past; they march by in melancholy procession; and we lie in terror looking at them. Nobody knows but ourselves. Next morning we go forth to business with a smiling face; but conscience has had its revenge.

This punishment is sometimes of the most terrible description. It was set forth by the

ancients under the figure of three sisters of awful aspect. They were called the Eumenides or Furies. Tall in stature, they were draped in black; serpents twisted in their hair, and blood dropped from their eyes. Their step was noiseless, swift and unrelenting. They pursued the guilty, especially those who had sinned against the aged or their own parents, and those who had committed perjury or murder! No prayers, no sacrifices, no tears could move them. Cain was fleeing from them, as he wandered like a vagabond over the earth. Herod was hunted by them when, on hearing of the preaching of Jesus, he cried, It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded, risen from the dead! Judas, the betrayer, was fleeing from them when he rushed into the jaws of death rather than abide the touch of their fingers. This was what Shakespeare meant when he made the ghost of Banquo sit at Macbeth's table, and the spectres of those whom Richard III. had murdered defile before him in his tent, on the night before the battle in which he lost his

life, and claim revenge. These are extreme cases; but this pain is one which everyone has felt in his own degree. It is among the secrets known to all. There are hidden chambers in every soul, the keys of which are never given away, and one of these is a torture chamber, where conscience plies its scourge and rack.

4. Another function of conscience is to pass judgment on the conduct of others.

When we see our fellow men acting around us, we cannot help judging whether they are doing right or wrong, and approving or condemning them accordingly; and they do the same towards us. Here, indeed, the judgments of conscience are less reliable, as they are passed upon imperfect information; and sometimes it is a stern duty to check them. Yet the judgments passed by others on our conduct are often perfectly just, and they are intended by the Author of our being to play an important part in our moral education. They are meant to stimulate our own con-

science. A friend may be to us a second conscience; because the thought of his judgment may make us pause to consider how acts will look to him which our own conscience would hardly check. It sometimes happens that a man's own conscience has punished him insufficiently for a hidden sin, or at all events the punishment is past and forgotten; but by-and-bye his sin is found out; the public conscience condemns him; and only then is the full guilt of his conduct brought home to himself. This is to be the principle of the last judgment. The good deeds and bad deeds for which mortals have been rewarded or punished by conscience in secret are to be made known to a public vast as humanity; and in the mirror of the universal conscience each man is to see the image of his life.

5. Conscience speaks to us of the sentence of a still more august Judge, and the gift of a higher tribunal.

The word Conscience has been supposed by many of the foremost thinkers to mean

"knowledge along with another." Who is this other, who knows everything along with ourselves? It is God. When, for example, you awake in the night, and conscience is dealing with you, are you not aware of another Eye that is surveying the whole interior of your soul, and judging it? Inquire in your own breast, and say if there is anything in the world you are surer of than this? Many regard this as the strongest and most direct proof of the Divine existence. And it proves not only the existence of God, but His character as holy and righteous. Nor will His sentences, thus made known to us, remain without effect. There is no instinct in the soul of man more undeniable than the anticipation of something after death—of a tribunal at which the whole of life will be revised, and retribution awarded with perfect justice. It is this which imparts to death its solemnity. We instinctively know that we are going to our account. And such great natural instincts cannot be false.

Thus conscience is an internal mirror in

which the image of the eternal world is reflected; it is a revelation of God Himself; and no more can be needed to show how august a faculty it is, and how careful a cultivation it is entitled to.

II. WHAT A GOOD CONSCIENCE IS.

All the faculties we possess require cultivation. And that the conscience is no exception to this rule is clearly indicated in the Bible, which speaks of "an evil conscience," designating thereby a condition into which this faculty may sink, if its training is neglected; while, on the other hand, it speaks of "a good conscience" as something which requires to be earnestly sought and jealously retained. Perhaps I ought to speak both of what an evil conscience is and what a good conscience is. But what an evil conscience is may be sufficiently indicated if I describe the marks of a good conscience. These, I think, are three:—

1. *A good conscience is an enlightened conscience.*

The prime function of conscience, we saw to be, to tell us which of two ways of acting is right and which wrong. But there has been much debate among philosophers as to whether, in performing this function, it is infallible. Can it, at the critical point, make mistakes, pronouncing that to be right which is wrong and that to be wrong which is right? We are bound to follow the guidance of conscience whenever its voice is distinctly heard; but can this voice mislead?

Much may be said on both sides. On the one hand, everyone must feel how high and noble would be a life invariably ruled by conscience. Let any plain man, be he Christian or heathen, go into solitude, and inquire what is his duty in any particular case, with an honest desire to find it, and will he be mistaken? The united conscience of the world supports all the most important rules of life. On the other hand, however, there have been whole nations which have elevated their favorite crimes into virtues; as in the ancient world the most advanced peoples considered it a

duty to hate their enemies. Saul of Tarsus thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Miseducation, self-interest and passion blind the eyes even of conscience. We not unfrequently defend in ourselves acts which we would instantly condemn if we saw them done by others. Low ideals of life make us satisfied when we ought to be aiming higher. The light which is in us may be darkness.

In short, the conscience requires to be enlightened. God's law is written on it; but the lettering is like that of an old inscription, where the words are filled up with moss and mould, so that they are apt to be misread and require to be re-cut. Many means are available for this purpose—all just maxims and observations on life and conduct; all high-toned books and discourses; all living examples of admirable character. But the great educator of conscience is the Word of God, in which, happily for mankind, the law of right conduct is written so clearly that he who runs may read. The Bible, however, is

not intended to take the place of conscience, but to make it more serviceable. It is like a lamp lit within it, by which the laws which have been inscribed on it by the Divine finger are rendered more legible.

2. A good conscience is a tender conscience.

While the first excellence of conscience is to tell accurately which is the right road and which the wrong, it is hardly less necessary to have a conscience which urgently prompts to take the right road, and at once gives warning by the prick of pain when a wrong step is taken.

It is too evident that the consciences of all have not this sensitiveness; for many do wrong without feeling pain. The Scripture speaks of some whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron. As a hot iron, touching the finger-tips, would harden the skin, so that the fine sense of touch, located there, could not act, so may the conscience be seared in such a way that it does not prompt to do the right

or inflict pain when the wrong is done. It is appalling to what lengths this moral insensibility may go. You will see a young man, after a few years of the sins of the city, breaking his mother's heart and bringing his father's grey hairs down with sorrow to the grave, apparently without a qualm. The hardened debauchee will ruin a fair life and introduce shame and desolation into an honored home, and then go among his companions and boast of it. But we may all see now and then the beginnings of this hardening process in ourselves. Acts which at first we touch with shame and fear we do at last without any inward pain. The conscience is ceasing to perform its functions, and atrophy is setting in.

What produces such a state? It is disobedience. If the conscience is constantly called upon to condemn the same sin, which is contsantly repeated, it gradually ceases to perform the useless function. If its warnings are neglected, they become less and less distinct, and at last cease altogether. On the

contrary, obedience to conscience sharpens it, and makes it a more and more perfect instrument. There are virgin souls which blush in secret at the most transient thought of sins in which others wallow without remorse. There are men who wince, as high-blooded horses do at the touch of the whip, at the first sound in their hearing of words which in other companies form the staple of conversation. The conscience may be trained to tremble at the least approach of dishonor, as the needle of a perfect compass indicates the least turn of the ship. This is the path to all fineness of character. It gradually elevates the whole man, stamping the aspect of dignity and purity even on the external appearance. A hardened concsience coarsens and brutalizes soul and body, but a tender conscience refines both.

3. A good eonscience is a purified conscience.

When a sin is committed, it makes a stain on the conscience, and the stain burns. This pain is the hint of nature to seek the removal

of the sin. But, if it is not taken, the pain in time assuages; and stain may be added to stain, till the conscience is defiled through and through.

In such a defiled conscience there are terrible latent possibilities, for the pain may at any time break out again. Sometimes it does so in time—when a man is awakened to a sense of his bad past, and in pain and tears cries out for deliverance from it. Sometimes it is by the sudden apparition of eternity, in which it can perceive nothing but a fearful menace of judgment, that the conscience is aroused. We have reason to believe that the late pain of unpardoned sin, if it is not felt in time, will break out all the more intolerably beyond the veil.

Can this defilement be removed? This surely is the question for every child of Adam; for what conscience is there which has not been stained with some sins? It is a question which the conscience itself cannot answer. Conscience prescribes our duty and rewards us if we perform it. If we fail, it fills us with

alarms and forebodings, but it cannot tell how these may be removed. This honor belongs to the Gospel of Christ. Like the law, conscience is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Conscience may be compared to a stern guide, who gives a lantern to a cripple and orders him to go the way which the light reveals on pain of death; but it has no concern for his pitiful inability to surmount the difficult path. It is Christ who heals the cripple, putting strength into his feet and ankle-bones, so that he walks and leaps and praises God. Yet it is questionable if anyone can appreciate the blood which cleanseth us from all sin who has not felt the shame and pain of a conscience defiled, or if anyone can understand the easiness of the yoke of Christ who has not felt his bones broken by the yoke of the law. Though conscience does not of itself know the way to reconciliation, yet it wanders restless and excited till it catches sight of Calvary, when its eye kindles like that of the exile who sees on the horizon the cliffs of his native land; and, when it

reaches the cross, it pitches its tent there forever.

CHRIST AND THE WANTS OF HUMANITY

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—I Cor. i, 30.

II

CHRIST AND THE WANTS OF HUMANITY

I REMEMBER hearing a naturalist describe a species of jelly-fish, which, he said, lives fixed to a rock, from which it never stirs. It does not require to go in search of food, because in the decayed tissues of its own organism there grows a kind of seaweed, on which it subsists. I thought I had never heard of any creature so comfortable. But the naturalist who was describing it went on to say that it is one of the very lowest forms of animal life, and the extreme comfort which it enjoys is the very badge of its degraded position. As you rise in the scale of life, you come upon animals with multiplying wants; and it may be laid down as a general rule that, the nobler any form of animal life is, the more complex will its wants be found to be.

This interesting law of natural history ap-

plies to human life also. A savage has very few wants. Compare his kit, if he requires to make a journey, with the innumerable articles which have to be packed in all sorts of receptacles, when you move from home. Compare the simple life of an African kraal with the arrangements for the police, the water-supply, the food-supply, the postoffice, the telegraph system of one of our cities. It may be laid down as a general rule, to which, however, there may be exceptions, that the progress of civilization has for its badge the multiplication of wants.

But this law extends further: it holds good in the spiritual sphere. If you go back and trace the history of human nature in its higher types, you will discover that this has been the principle of ascent. In the ancient world three races stand out, head and shoulders, above their neighbors—the Greek, the Roman, and the Hebrew; and, if you go deep enough in the study of their history, you will discover that each of them felt some want of human nature as it had never been felt be-

fore, and taught the nations to feel it likewise; and this was its contribution to the progress of the world. And now the position to which any individual rises in the scale of humanity depends on the reproduction of these catholic wants in his experience, and the intensity with which he feels them. A man may live and die without feeling them, and he may be all the more comfortable on this account; but his comfort is like that of the jelly-fish—it is the badge of degradation.

It is the glory of Christianity to be intimately associated with these deep catholic wants of the soul; it is the divine provision for their satisfaction. This is precisely what is meant when it is said in our text that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; because each of these four things answers to a profound need of human nature.

Wisdom.—Perhaps St. Paul mentioned this first because he was writing to Greeks. Our

text occurs in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and the Corinthians were Greeks with the outstanding features of their race strongly marked in their character and life. One of these was the passion for knowledge.

This is a part of human nature, but it does not speak out in all races or in all individuals. It is curious how little savages care to know. Some of them cannot count up as far as ten. They do not know the people living on the other side of the mountains which girdle their valley. They do not inquire whence the rivers come which fertilize their fields, or whither they flow. They reap a little corn from the soil, but do not suspect the mineral wealth which may lie beneath the surface. They go on from generation to generation doing the same things over and over again, and the grandson is no wiser than his grandfather. Intellectual curiosity has not been stirred in them; it is there, but it is latent.

In Greece, however, this latent capacity broke out as a great excitement and longing, which went on increasing from century to

century. The Greeks sent out travelers on every hand, who gathered the most comprehensive acquaintance with the lands, the peoples, the habits and customs of the world in which they lived. They made amazing progress in ascertaining the natural history of plants and animals. They noted with keen eyes the positions and movements of the heavenly bodies. This thirst grew ever deeper. Men of vast intellectual reach rose among them, and carried inquiry forward into still more important regions. The knowledge of matter led on to the knowledge of mind; the pursuit of knowledge deepened into the pursuit of wisdom. Socrates, the wisest of them all, told his fellow-countrymen that the knowledge of the stars was far less important than the knowledge of their own souls. What is man? In his short life what is he meant to do? What is the prize which, if won, makes life a success, and which, if lost, makes life a failure? Who is the man of men, whom all should strive to be like?

Such were the questions on which the

Greeks, under the guidance of their sages, whetted their intellects. They strove hard to find the answers to them, but the greatest of them only called themselves philosophers—that is, lovers or seekers of wisdom, not its possessors. An irresistible impulse sustained them in the search, and even the search was ennobling; but they knew that they had not found.

In the fulness of time St. Paul was sent to the representatives of this grand active-minded race, and he was able to announce to them that he had found what they were seeking—"Jesus Christ," he said, "is made unto us wisdom." They had been inquiring what human life would be like, if it were absolutely fair and good—what were the lineaments and what the figure of manhood at its best. *Ecce Homo*, answered the Apostle, holding up before their eyes the image of his Master.

The consciousness of this want, which was first fully awakened in the land of Greece, will never again disappear from the human soul. None can rise to a high stature of man-

hood who has not felt it. At the present day it is the ruling passion of tens of thousands, to whom What is truth? seems to be the most important question which can be asked. Through the obscure woods of ignorance eager pioneers are clearing pathways on every hand, and knowledge of all kinds is multiplying to unmanageable proportions. Perhaps however, amidst our accumulations, we are not out of need of the advice which Socrates addressed to his contemporaries—to return from the confines of creation home to their own souls. Where there is much knowledge there may be little wisdom. What is man? What is life? These are still the supreme questions, and no one can graduate into the ranks of the higher manhood who has not asked them with absorbing interest. And what are the answers? Is there any answer under the sun like this—Behold the man Christ Jesus, that is what manhood ought to be; Behold the life of Christ, that is what human life should be?

Righteousness.—If St. Paul had the Greek element of the Christian Church in his eye when he said, "Christ is made unto us wisdom," he may have had in his eye the Roman element when he said, "Christ is made of God unto us righteousness." There was, no doubt, such an element there; for Corinth, though a Greek city, was at that time ruled by the Romans, whose soldiers fortified its citadel and paraded its streets. Besides, it was a favorite resort of Romans, whether bent on business or pleasure.

Now, if the Greeks were the people of knowledge, the Romans were as distinctly the people of righteousness or justice. They had conquered the world. Originally a small tribe confined within a narrow domain on the banks of the Tiber, they gradually spread their conquests south and north, east and west, till these included the whole known world. They obliterated the boundaries between country and country by bringing them all under a common sway. They found the nations living at continual war with one an-

other; but they reduced them to peace by taking the arms out of their hands, and compelled them to submit their conflicting claims to a new arbitrament. This was the arbitrament of law. The Romans were not only the conquerors, but also the law-givers of the world. Wherever the irresistible tread of their legions opened up the way, their tribunals of justice followed, and their legal system is still the foundation of all modern codes of jurisprudence.

It was an immense problem which the Romans thus opened up—the relation of man to man and of nation to nation. But it cannot be said to have been solved by them. Justice has two sides: on the one hand, there is what you owe to me; on the other, there is what I owe to you. About the former I may be very keen, while I am still very negligent of the latter. There is a justice which compels you to give me my due; but this is very different from the justice which impels me to wish to give you yours. The Roman justice was of the coarser type. While com-

pelling others to do right, the Roman himself was selfish and hard-hearted; the proudest day of his life was when he ascended in triumph to the Capitol with captive kings bound to his chariot; and in the arena he butchered the conquered in hundreds to make a holiday. He had not discovered the secret of justice.

But St. Paul had discovered it. This was why he was not ashamed of the Gospel, but ready to preach it to those at Rome also. He knew that he brought the very thing that Rome needed. What was it? It was love. Christ is righteousness, because Christ is love. Is not this the Gospel still for every age, and for our age? Is not this still the question of the day—the relation of man to man and of nation to nation—how to put an end to war; how to disarm the so-called Christian nations, which confront each other armed to the teeth; how to reconcile the bitterness between class and class, between capital and labor; how to melt your hard heart and mine, my reader, so that, instead of taking our brother by the throat with "Pay me that thou owest," we

shall be chiefly anxious about paying him that which we owe—the debt of fair dealing, of sympathy and helpfulness? And what other answer to this question has the world yet discovered which can be compared with Christ's golden rule and His spirit of benevolence?

Sanctification.—Besides Greeks and Romans there was a third element in the Church of Corinth. In that age the Jews were scattered everywhere in pursuit of gain, just as they are in all centres of trade and commerce at the present day. In every city which he entered St. Paul found them; to them he always first offered the Gospel; and the Jewish converts formed the nucleus of the membership in all his churches. If it is reasonable to think that he had the Greeks in his eye when he said, Christ is our wisdom, and the Romans when he said, Christ is our righteousness, it is quite as likely that he had the Jews specially in view when he said, "Christ is made of God unto us sanctification."

The Jew had an even more unique and im-

portant part to play in the evolution of the history of man than the two other elect races of the ancient world. He did not possess the intellectual gifts of the Greek. He had no art to speak of, and he had no philosophy till a late date, when he borrowed it from the Greeks. Nor had he the conquering instincts of the Roman. He often, indeed, dreamed of conquest and world-wide sway; but he was to timid and too much attached to the narrow land of his birth to realize his dreams. But his genius took a more difficult and far nobler flight. In him the want of God first asserted itself with all its force. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God;" "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my soul longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land"—these are not only the utterances of individual psalmists, but the voice of the nation. The Jew aspired to walk with God; the highest blessedness he could think of was to be a saint.

It was only another side of the same state

of mind when in the Jew there was developed the sense of distance from God and unworthiness to walk with Him. The Jew felt in the very marrow of his bones that he was a sinner. While intellect developed all its powers in the Greek race, conscience first unfolded all its powers in the Jewish—its majestic authority in commanding and forbidding its vigor in condemning, the awful scourge of terror and remorse with which it chastises the soul that sinneth.

The Jew's question was, How can I be rid of my sin? How can I be just with God? But, as the greatest of the Greeks confessed that they were not possessors, but only lovers, of wisdom, so the greatest of the Jews confessed that their longing for purity and peace was never satisfied. They sought it by trying to keep the Law fully; but the ideal mocked their efforts, being too high for them. They sought satisfaction in the rites of sacrifice and attempted with rivers of blood to quench the thirst which was parching their souls. But the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin.

The Gospel of Christ answered this long-drawn, passionate cry of centuries, when it said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." St. Paul, himself a Jew, had sounded all the depths of this longing of his race; but his efforts only ended in the cry of despair, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" till the secret of the Gospel was revealed to him, when he sprang to his feet, emancipated and strong, with the cry on his lips, "Thanks be unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"; and, ever after, it was his mission to make known that "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

This want which the Jew discovered is as native to the human soul as that discovered by the Greek or the Roman. It is, indeed, the soul's deepest and most sacred need. Many may never have felt it, but, till it is felt, the highest position which is accessible to manhood cannot be reached. In earth or

heaven there is nothing so august, so elevating, so beautiful as holiness. And the way to holiness lies through the valley of humiliation for a guilty life and past the cross of Calvary. The friendship of Jesus is the guarantee of sanctity: "He is made unto us sanctification."

Redemption.—We are moving among the deep things of human nature: these three cravings are among the most august qualities it possesses. But there is a fourth worthy to be put side by side with them—the craving for immortality.

That death does not end all—that the grave is not the goal of humanity, but only the gateway to a new existence of vaster range—this is surely the greatest discovery that the annals of the world record. Is it a discovery, or is faith in immortality universal? This is a question which has been much discussed. The truth I believe to be this: the longing for immortality is, like the thirst for knowledge or any other of the supreme wants mentioned

to-day, native to human nature; but it does not follow that in all ages, or in all countries, it must have been keenly felt. An instinct may be native to the soul, and yet long be latent; we can tell in what age, for example and among what race the passion for wisdom first arose. It is not so easy to tell where the longing for immortality first decisively asserted itself. It does not seem, however, to have been in any of the three historical peoples of antiquity already mentioned—the Greeks, the Romans, or the Hebrews. Historians speak rather of Egypt and Persia—two countries lying on the dim borderland between the bright circle of civilization and the surrounding continents of darkness—as the places where man first came to full consciousness of this demand of his nature.

But, once having asserted itself, the sense of this want can never die out of the human soul. Now and then, indeed, men may be heard speaking as if mankind might give up this hope and be perfectly content to die as a dog dieth. In the same way, last century,

Rousseau and others advocated a return to a state of nature, in which there should be no more curiosity for knowledge or passion for wisdom than in the minds of savages. It is just as unlikely that the passion for immortality will die out of the minds of men as that the intellectual thirst which first grew keen in Greece will disappear and trouble men no more. And the calamity, if it were possible, would be an even more degrading one.

It requires, indeed, special experiences thoroughly to evoke this longing. It may be evoked by the sense of the inequalities of this life, which a more perfect world is needed to redress. There was one portion of St. Paul's audience on whom this would tell. I have spoken of his hearers as Greeks, Romans and Hebrews; but more numerous than either of these classes were the slaves, of whom there were four hundred thousand in the city of Corinth. To these there was hardly any outlet from degradation in this life, but they would eagerly grasp at the promise of redemption in the next. Perhaps no one can now

feel the passion for immortality fully who has not known what it is to love intensely—to love wisdom, or to love moral perfection, or to love another heart. It is as your whole being goes out to an ideal object that it becomes intolerable to think that death is to interpose and end the development which has promised to be so vast, but has only commenced. Sometimes it is while standing by a death-bed, on which lies one whose physical frame is worn to a shadow and on the verge of dissolution, but whose mind, instead of decaying with the body, seems only to be disengaging itself from obstructions and beginning to expatiate in its native strength, that one is pierced with the conviction that the spirit does not die with the body. But perhaps the most authentic intimation we receive of immortality is from conscience—it is that dread of something after death which accompanies the commission of crime, and gathers round the soul, as, on the eve of dissolution, it looks back to the unpardoned sins of a lifetime. In that dread hour men know

that they have not done with their sins yet, but will have to face them again beyond the veil.

Thus immortality is not only a great hope, but also a great terror. We passionately long for it, and yet, at the same time, we recoil from it in guilty fear. Who can reconcile this contradiction? Here is the answer: "Christ is made unto us redemption." He is both our redemption from death and our redemption from sin in one. In Him the great hope of immortality receives its justification, and in Him the great terror is transmuted into immortal joy.

Is not this a gloriously human Gospel? It meets us in our utmost straits, and delivers us. Have you not observed that it is in your best, your most thoughtful, your sanest moments, that the Gospel seems truest to you? If you have ever been really wise, really sane, really a man, that was the time when you were nearest accepting Christ. It

is in superficial and shallow moods, when the soul is blinded with the glare of the world and satisfying itself with vulgar prizes, that Christ appears unreal and unnecessary. Know yourself and you will know Him.

Yet, on the other hand, how gloriously divine this Gospel is! By a single gift, God has given all that human nature desires. He has given us Christ, and there is not a deep want which Christ does not satisfy. In the name of all to whom He is precious, let me commend Him to you. "Oh taste and see that He is good; who trusts in Him is blest."

THE RELIGION FOR TO-DAY

"A MAN IN CHRIST."—2 COR. xii, 2.

III

THE RELIGION FOR TO-DAY

FIRST, *it must be manly*.

A Christian is defined by St. Paul as a man in Christ." But, observe, "*a man* in Christ;" put the accent there first.

This is very peculiarly a demand of the present age. Ours is a democratic age; and this means that the minds of men are less and less influenced by merely hereditary and official distinctions, and bestow their esteem only where they recognize personal merit. Formerly it was enough if a man was a king or a noble. Now people ask, Is he a kingly man? Is he himself noble? A clergyman, writing to the clergy, has said: "Not long ago a minister was certain of honor because he belonged to the clerical order and wore the clerical garb; as the saying goes, people respected his cloth. But this is rapidly passing

away. Respect for minsters who are worthy of the name is not, indeed, passing away; it was never greater than it is at present. But people no longer respect the cloth, unless there is a man inside it. If a minister is to be loved and revered, he must be able to dispense with all artficial cubits added to his stature, and coming down among men and standing side by side with them on his bare feet, allow his manhood to be compared with theirs." This is a truth which all Christians require to take to heart. Religion of old enveloped itself in mystery and retired behind the walls of the cloister or the convent; and the ignorant multitudes looked up to it, from amidst their sins and sufferings, with traditional reverence. There are countries of Europe in whose languages to this day "a religious person" means the wearer of an ecclesiastical dress. But religion has in our day been summoned forth into the open. It has to show what it can make of men in the ordinary ways of life. Does it make servants and subordinates more trustworthy? Does

it make employers and superiors more just and more generous? Does it make merchants more honorable? Does it sweeten the temper, refine the manners, and make the tongue charitable. These are the tests by which Christianity is tried to-day. Some years ago, during a widespread revival of religion, a friend of mine, a minister, was visited by a young engineer, belonging to his congregation, who informed him that he had come to a religious decision. My friend asked him how it had come about. Had he been attending the revival meetings? No. Had he been impressed in church? No. Had any companion been talking to him about his soul? No. How was it then? It was the way in which the foreman of the place in which he was employed did his work; he knew the foreman to be a Christain, and he wished to be a Christian of the same type.

This is thoroughly characteristic of our age. Does the student who is a Christian wish to impress others for good? Then let him be the most diligent student in the class and, if pos-

sible, occupy the first place in it. This will speak for itself, even if he has nothing else to say; and, if he gets anything else to say, it will lend weight to every word he utters. The Christian apprentice who wishes to influence others for Christ ought to be the most punctual and obliging in the whole establishment. If an employer desires to have religious influence with his *employes*, it will not be enough to give them good advice: he must behave so as to make them say they have the kindest and best of masters. The way to adorn the gospel of God our Saviour in our day is to exhibit it in combination with a massive manhood or a sweet and gracious womanhood.

Secondly it must be brotherly.

An ancient Roman poet brought down the applause of the entire theatre with the words, *Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*— I am a man: nothing that belongs to men is uninteresting to me. He and those who applauded him acknowledged that in manhood,

when it is fully developed, brotherhood is included; and I do not think we can be wrong in stating that when St. Paul called a Christian "a man in Christ," he included this too. We do so ourselves in the common phrase "a man and a brother."

Ours is, as I have said, a democratic age; and it is also a philanthropic age. Indeed, the democratic idea easily expands into the philanthropic one; for it emphasizes the dignity and the rights of man; and the rights of one man imply the duties of all other men, to treat him as a man, and to respect his dignity.

In past ages the majority of the inhabitants even of civilized countries were in a condition which was utterly inconsistent with their dignity as men; but the possessors of a happier lot were not moved by the spectacle of the degradation around them, because it seemed to them to be the law of nature and the ordinance of God. In our day there are portions of the population existing in conditions where a life worthy of men is almost or altogether impossible: childhood is stunted and

crushed; the bloom of modesty and reverence is rudely rubbed off the mind of youth; manhood is so surrounded with temptation that it can hardly escape. But the great difference lies in this, that at present there are multitudes of those who have been born in happier circumstances to whom this spectacle is a perpetual pain. They cannot enjoy the comforts and refinements of their own lot for thinking of the sin and misery of those less fortunate than themselves. One of the most brilliant of our younger statesmen recently remarked, that the politics of the present, and still more the politics of the future, are the politics of the poor. We even witness in our day the strange spectacle of an atheistic philanthropy—men and women who do not believe in God or in Christ or in immortality yet proclaiming the service of man to be the true vocation of man, and professing themselves to be in all the greater haste to help their suffering fellow-creatures, because they believe that they must be made happy in this world or not at all.

Whether such philanthropy has any real fuel to keep it burning, or is merely the afterglow of Christian sentiment lingering on the icy summits of unbelief, we need not at present stay to inquire; but it is a sign of the time. And is it not evident that in such a temper of the general mind the Christianity which will tell on the age must be a brotherly Christianity?

Christianity is nothing if it is not philanthropic. Christ taught the doctrine of human brotherhood and placed it on its true foundation eighteen hundred years before fraternity became the watchword of atheism and revolution. But, if brotherhood be truly the property of Christianity, then the world of to-day demands that it be proved by deeds, and not by words. It demands that those who bear the name of Christ should be seen standing back from those customs of society and those practices in trade which grind the faces of the poor and enrich the few out of the vices of the many. It demands that they be seen engaged in an uncompromising strug-

gle with the causes of poverty and misery. A Christianity intent only upon saving its own soul in the repose of luxurious churches, whilst the river of human sin and misery sweeps unregarded past the door, will not impress the present age. The world will not be persuaded that the church believes her own creed, if, teaching what she does about the blessings of possessing Christ and the infinite misery of being separated from Him, she does not exert herself to make Him known to every creature under heaven.

Thirdly it must be godly.

St. Paul's definition of a Christain is "a man in Christ." We have put the accent first on the first member of the phrase—"a man"—and I have shown that this implies also that a Christian ought to be a brother of men. But now put the accent on the second member of the phrase—"*in Christ.*" Surely the strongest accent falls here: the thing which

distinguishes a Christian from other men is that he is "a man *in Christ*."

I have said of our age that it is democratic and that it is philanthropic: many would, I daresay, add that it is sceptical. I do not say so; but I say that it is an age which needs a sign. Its religious teachers tell it, that of old God revealed Himself, and spake in miracles and prophecy; they tell it, that many centuries ago He revealed Himself still more fully in His Son, and that in Jesus of Nazareth God dwelt among men. The arguments are strong which can be brought forward in proof of these statements. But it is long since these things happened, and this age is doubtful of the evidence. Can you not show us God at work in the world of to-day? If there be a God, does He work no miracle now?

What has Christianity to say to such a question? If it is intelligent, it seems to me it is bound to answer that God is in the world to-day, and is still a God that doeth wonders. The age of miracles is not past. We profess that supernatural changes have taken place

in us, and are taking place in us, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who works, indeed, through our own will and effort, but is far more than they. For what is it to be "a man in Christ?" It is to have a life which is fed from no earthly source. It is to be in actual contact with the supernatural. To us Jesus Christ is not dead; He is not a mere historical figure; He is alive; He is with us; He is in us and we in Him.

But, if these things are so, what is there to show for them? If these forces are at work in us, what are they effecting? They ought to produce a Christlike character. This is what the world is looking for. Nor does it fail to appreciate it when it sees it. There is no power in the world so subduing as genuine goodness. Holiness is a flower which the world well knows it is incapable of producing out of its own soil; and, when it sees it, it acknowledges that there must be another world to account for it. When all the arguments have failed, the doubting mind yields to the evidence of a saintly life.

We often hear calls for an aggressive Christianity, which will go forth with irresistible energy and conquer the world. But are you sure that this is the way to conquer the world? You remember, in the fable, the contest between the wind and the sun as to which of them would compel the traveler to remove his cloak? The wind blew and blew, more and more furiously; but the traveler only wrapped his garment the more tightly about him; but he took it off at once when the sun brought to bear on him its gentle and genial force. A competent writer, describing the improvement in the manners and morality of England at the close of last century, raises the question to what it was due. In the beginning of last century every sixth house in London was a gin-shop, and gin-drinking infected the population like an epidemic. Dr. Johnson told Boswell, that in his native town of Lichfield every householder went to bed drunk every night, and nobody thought the worse of him. Profane swearing was a mark of good breeding. On Sunday the people

gathered for cock-fighting and bull-baiting; and even the clergy took part in these cruel sports. Before the century closed there was a complete revolution in public opinion, and the whole tone of manners was altered. And to what was the change due? These things had not been put down by legislation; nor did the educated and cultured classes lead the fashion in the direction of better things. No; but the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley raised up all over England a sprinkling of converted men and women living the Christ-like life. Each of these became a kind of mirror in which the age beheld its own hideousness; each became a little window through which people saw out beyond their own evil customs to a better time.

This is what we need—not so much an aggressive as an attractive religion. Men are not at peace; they are hungry for happiness, and they pursue it over sea and land, but they have not found it. If in every Christian they beheld a soul manifestly at peace with itself, filled with a joy unspeakable which betrayed

that it has found the secret life, we should not need to preach to them and plead with them so much: they would come flocking of their own accord like doves to their windows.

THE EVIDENCES OF RELIGION

"And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."—St. John iv. 41, 42.

IV

THE EVIDENCES OF RELIGION

ANYONE approaching religion at present from the intellectual side alone will find great obstacles in the way of belief. In our century the human mind has been in an almost unparalleled state of activity, and immense accumulations have been made of new knowledge. With these, Christian thought has not yet had time to make a complete reckoning. Science, for example, has been extending its dominion towards all points of the compass; and it has greatly altered our conceptions of the wonderful universe in which we live. A hardly less characteristic movement of the modern mind is enthusiastic interest in the history of the past; and at the present moment the ancient documents of our religion, the Holy Scriptures, are being subjected to the most uncompromising investigation, while

new theories about them are being crowded in bewildering numbers on the public mind.

What is the individual to do in these circumstances? Must he wait till these controversies are settled, before having anything to do with religion? Without doubt it is the duty of Christianity, as an organized body, to reckon with all new knowledge; and intelligent minds will follow the course of the argument with interest, noting especially the points where traditional beliefs require to be modified on account of the incoming of fresh light. Perhaps in our day this work has not been carried on with sufficient vigor; the apologetic of the Church is lagging behind the advance of knowledge. But must the individual keep at a distance from religion till this work is completed? If so, it is manifest that many must spend their life without the influence of religion; and to lack this guidance and strength in the years when character is being formed is the greatest of all calamities. Besides, it is evident that those who are enjoying the comfort and strength of religion have not

waited till they were able to answer all these questions; for very few could pretend to have gone deeply into them all.

Can their faith, then, be justified? What is the kind of evidence on which certainty in religion is grounded?

A well-known incident of the gospel history will guide us in this investigation.

The Woman of Samaria was a remarkable instance of the effects which contact with Christ was able to produce. She came to Jacob's well a notorious sinner; she went back to the town a rejoicing believer. Not only so: she was transfomred into an eloquent evangelist, who spread abroad the news that the long expected Messiah and the Saviour of the world was at hand. And she was most successful. There is a strange persuasiveness in the testimony of one in whom the flame of divine love has just been kindled. Her word so moved her fellow-townsmen that they flocked out to see Jesus in numbers which, as they approached on the highway, reminded Him of the stalks of corn covering a harvest field.

Coming to Jesus with minds disposed to believe by the woman's testimony, they begged Him to stay amongst them; and He remained two days. These were memorable days for that city. Many, listening to His words of grace and truth, experienced the same change as the woman had undergone at the well; and, as the joy of believing overspread their souls, they said to the woman, in tones of hallowed pleasantry, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." They had believed at first, when she told them that the Saviour was at hand, because her words and her manner won them; but now they believed for a far stronger reason—because they had been saved themselves.

In these words the simple Samaritans, guided only by a vivid experience, gave expression to one of the prime truths of religion. They distinguished with perfect clearness between two kinds of evidence on which faith may rest—the evidence of hearsay or tradition and the evidence of experience.

The Evidence of Tradition.

We have all heard say that there is in this world such a thing as salvation, and that the Author and Depositary of it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Ever since we have been able to understand anything, we have been assured by a hundred witnesses, that men can be lifted out of the state of sin and misery in which they are born and raised to a happy and holy life in this world and to a state of unimaginable blessedness in the world to come; and that this has been made possible by the life and the death of Christ. These statements are the sum and substance of the creed of Christendom; and, I say, they have been reported to us by a great many witnesses. The witnesses are well deserving of credit; and, just as the Samaritan woman's fellow-townsmen believed when she testified about Christ, so we have good reason to trust those by whom these facts are certified.

In the first place, we have *the testimony of*

Scripture. The essence of the Bible is nothing else than that which I have declared to be the creed of Christendom. It reports that of old, God was in the world. He worked through the law and the prophets, convincing men of sin. He appeared in Jesus Christ, to take away the sin of the world. He revealed Himself in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and in the early successes of the Christian cause. To these facts the Bible bears witness.

Is it not an august witness? The Bible has mastered the mind of the world, and it is mastering it more and more. It is the great teacher of truthfulness, and in every part it breathes the air of simplicity and truth. It claims to be the word of Him who cannot lie. It is, indeed, outside testimony; it is only hearsay to us. But is it not most credible hearsay? If the Samaritans believed the testimony of a notorious woman, may not we much more believe that of the Bible?

Then there is the testimony of *Christian*

history and Christian learning. The witness of the Bible has been continued in the witness of the Church. Age after age, as the good news has sounded through the world, it has found a response in the human heart; and men of ability and character have risen up to declare that they have found in Christ the secret of life.

Specially worthy of note in this regard is that portion of Christian learning which has been occupied with the defence of Christianity. In all ages doubters have arisen, who have cast suspicion on the Gospel. Sometimes they have denied that man needs salvation, trying to persuade poor human nature that it is not so miserable after all, but has resources within itself which will enable it, in course of time, to achieve perfection and make of the world an earthly paradise. Sometimes they have admitted that man is utterly miserable, but denied that salvation is possible for him: miserable he is, and miserable he must remain. At other times they have contended that, whether salvation is possible

or not, at least Jesus Christ is not man's Saviour; for He was only a man Himself, and could not ransom the souls of His brothers. In all these forms doubt of Christianity has asserted itself, and pressed its supsicions on men's minds by strength of argument; but, as often as this has happened, God has raised men up of sanctified genius and learning, to refute the objections and surround Christianity with a circumvallation of evidences. Nor have these champions stood alone; they have only been the mouthpieces of obscure millions at their backs, who bore their testimony through them. This also, indeed, is only outside testimony; it is only hearsay; but is it not hearsay which has the strongest claim on our faith?

But, still further, there is *the testimony of those known to ourselves who have been saved by Christ.* This corresponds most closely with the testimony which the men of Samaria believed. They heard the woman tell that Jesus had shown her all her evil past and had

taken her sin away; and they marked a change in her demeanor—a softening of the countenance, indicating that the hardened heart was broken, and an earnestness of manner in telling her tale—which assured them that they might trust her. But has not the same testimony been borne to us, with the same marks of genuineness? Is any one ignorant that at the present hour there are tens of thousands alive with the same tale to tell—that they have met with Christ, and that He has broken their hearts and healed them again, and put a new song into their mouths and a new purpose into their lives? To many of us this appeal comes with overwhelming power; because the most sacred treasures which our memories contain are our recollections of those, in our homes or among our kindred, who have borne this testimony to us. They are the excellent of the earth—people that dwell alone in our memories, and are not to be reckoned with the others there—men of a dignity and a wisdom above the dower of manhood, women of a purity and a tender-

ness above even the dower of womanhood; but well we know that, in their own clear conviction, all they possessed which made them peculiar was the effect of their connection with the Saviour Christ.

This, too, is outside testimony; it is only hearsay; but it is enough to make some of us say, Even if I should never know anything of Christianity in my own experience, nothing will ever persuade me that it is not a reality; there is a secret, even though I may never know it; a power which is not of this earth must have gone to the shaping of those hallowed lives; and I believe that their own conviction about its origin was correct.

II. The Evidence of Experience.

The forms of testimony hitherto mentioned all come from without; and therefore I have called them hearsay. This has been done with no intention of disparaging them; on the contrary, I have shown that they are worthy of all acceptation. Yet in substance they are precisely like the testimony which

the Samaritans believed, when the woman reported to them her interview with Christ.

But, after Christ had been with them two days, the Samaritans believed in Him for a very different reason: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; but we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." They had now obtained, in place of the evidence of hearsay, the evidence of experience. They believed in Christ's power to tell them all that ever they did, because He had laid open the secrets of their own lives; and they believed that He was the Saviour of the world because He had saved themselves.

This passage from belief that rests on testimony to belief founded on experience is perfectly familiar in common life.

It may have chanced to you to hear from others the rumor of one of those men of whom only two or three arise in a generation—orators gifted with the power of overmastering eloquence. The reports of the effects produced by the speaking of such a man are often

wellnigh incredible. Your friend's eyes glisten, and his mind seems possessed, as he piles up hyperboles in the attempt to convey to you the impression made on him. You believe him, but it is with a cool kind of belief. You tell him not to get too excited, and you take a large discount off his words. Still his account is enough to make you go and hear for yourself, when an opportunity occurs. Suppose it is a real case of oratorical genius—that there is a charm in the liquid yet penetrating tones that thrills you through and through, and that, as one astonishing idea succeeds another, your excitement rises, till time and space are annihilated. Then it is your turn to be the excited reporter of the scene. You are annoyed that listeners remain cool under your description; but your own belief in the man is unshakable, and it is of a totally different quality from that which mere hearsay had produced.

Or take a rarer experience. It may chance that you know what it is to have labored under a disease which baffled all local skill and

reduced you to despair. But you heard of a physician who was said to have a genius for dealing with this special ailment. Enthusiastic admirers praised him to you, and told you incredible stories of what had happened to themselves. You listened with a dreary kind of belief; yet you went and tried. And the marvelous cleverness of the questions with which he found out everything about your case, the simple skill with which his trained fingers discovered the very spot where the malady was hidden, and the triumphant results of his treatment, turned you into the enthusiast who endeavored to persuade others by the self-contradictory argument that you would not have believed it if you had not come through it yourself.

There is such a faith in Christ arising from experience, and it is far above the faith of tradition. Those possess it who, having received the testimony concerning salvation and the Saviour borne by the Bible, by the Church, and by living men to whom He has been precious, have gone to Christ with their own

personal needs and, in their own saved souls, have received the evidence that all which others have said of Him is true.

He tells them all that ever they have done, as the Samaritan woman declared He had told her. There are states of conscience of which all have some experience—they are due to the convincing influence of the Holy Ghost —in which our evil past rises up before us, and the voice of God repeats the story of our sins. We can have no doubt in such solemn hours that a God exists, or that the holy law is the expression of His will. But never is this sight of ourselves so moving as when in spirit we are standing on Golgotha, and the accusing voice is heard issuing from the lips of Him who is hanging on the tree.

But this telling of all that ever we have done is only a preliminary to forgiving it all. Let anyone who has been told all that ever he did—that is, who has been awakened to the meaning of his own conduct, who feels how wicked his life has been, how it condemns him before God and cuts off his hope of bless-

edness in the future—let such a one approach Christ in prayer and in the Word, and deal with Him about his case, and he will obtain the sense of complete forgiveness. Christ has this gift to give in virtue of His life and death on earth. He can blot out the past, and cancel its power to condemn us now or punish us hereafter. And the seal and evidence that He has done so is the peace, passing all understanding, which is shed abroad in the believing heart.

But the experience of Christ's power to save does not stop here. The root of the misery of an unsaved man is not in his unforgiven past—bad as this may be—but in his nature alienated from God. It is from this that individual sins arise. It is owing to this that he finds it difficult or unpleasant to think of God, and that his life is prayerless, or his prayers formal. But let a man who is feeling in this way come to the Saviour and put himself into His hands, and he will experience a mighty change. The touch of Christ quickens the spirit of man—that is, the part of his

nature intended for intercourse with God and eternity—and causes its powers to go forth with vigor and satisfaction upon their proper objects. Love to God, to God's people, to God's Word, to God's house, to everything that is God's, will break forth, and the spiritual world will become as real as the natural has always been.

And this change is a growing one. The oftener and the more ardently a man thus turns to Christ, laying hold of Him by faith and closing his entire nature round Him, the more patent will the consequences be. The daily life of a Christian ought to be a daily meeting and dealing with Christ, as friend with friend—speaking to Him in prayer, listening to Him in the Word, learning to know His mind, imitating His example, and rejoicing in His love. And, if we are cultivating such a connection with Him, there will inevitably pass influences from Him into us, the transforming effects of which on our character and life will be a growing demonstration that all which the saints of the past have said of Him is true.

Such, then, are the two kinds of evidence on which faith may rest.

Both are valuable, and they ought not to be separated. They lend each other mutual support; for the more a man is satisfied with the historical credentials of Christianity, the more confidence will he have in committing to it his own vital interests; and, on the other hand, the more certain and satisfying his own experience of it is, the more will he be persuaded that it is not a mere fiction of the imagination, but has its root and foundation in the nature of things.

But, though both kinds of evidence are valuable, they are not equally valuable.

The evidence of tradition is external, and is, therefore, liable to be shaken by many external influences. The Bible is exposed to constant assaults; and these may, for a time, lack a satisfactory reply. The learning of the Church on the side of Christianity may chance sometimes to be opposed by still greater learning on the opposite side. Even the testimony of the lives of the saints may

fail us. It may not be our good fortune to see true religion embodied in persons who command our deepest homage and respect. We may even see it embodied in characters which make on us an opposite impression. And there is the still sadder possibility of seeing those whom we have taken for saints turning out to be hypocrites. Many such dangers beset the faith which is due to hearsay. But the evidence on which the other kind of faith rests is internal. It is a personal possession which none can take from us. It is a part of ourselves, and the principal part. How can I believe that there is no such thing as salvation, necessary or possible, if I am saved myself? How can I give up my faith that Christ is a divine Saviour, if He has saved, and is daily saving, me? Sometimes, indeed, one may doubt the reality of one's own experience; but, if it is constantly growing and becoming more and more the predominant element in one's life, it must more and more throw off every vestige of doubt.

There is another difference between these

two kinds of evidence: the faith that is due to hearsay does not save; the faith of experience does. We may accept the testimony of the Bible and the Church and the saints to such facts as that all men are sinners and need a Saviour, and that salvation is to be found in Christ alone. But will this save us? It will not, unless, making use of his testimony, we put it to the proof for ourselves by going to Christ and dealing with Him about our own spiritual needs.

I should not like, in regard to any of the great experiences of human nature, to be wholly dependent on the testimony of others.

I do not wish to have merely the word of the poets for the beauty and glory of nature. I wish to feel the awakening life of spring and to see the splendors of the growing year with my own senses,—

> Our present sunsets are as rich in gold
> As ere the Iliad's music was outrolled.

I will not take the mere word of Shakespeare or Burns for the sweetness of love, or the glory of youth, or the joy of independence.

While delighting in the immortal expression which they have given to these sentiments, I desire to experience the feelings myself in all their freshness and in all their power. And especially in regard to the very highest experiences of the soul—those of religion—I am not content merely to receive the testimony of St. John and St. Paul, of Augustine or Bernard, of Luther or Calvin, of Wesley or McCheyne, that they found salvation satisfying and Christ precious. Gladly, indeed, do I accept their testimony, and rejoice that they were able to give such golden expression to that which I cannot worthily utter; yet I wish to enjoy the experiences myself, and to be able to say to even the greatest of these witnesses: "Now I believe, not because of thy saying; for I have heard Him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

PUBLIC SPIRIT

"IF THOU ALTOGETHER HOLDEST THY PEACE AT THIS TIME, THEN SHALL THERE ENLARGEMENT AND DELIVERANCE ARISE TO THE JEWS FROM ANOTHER PLACE; BUT THOU AND THY FATHER'S HOUSE SHALL BE DESTROYED; AND WHO KNOWETH WHETHER THOU ART COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?"—ESTHER iv. 14.

V

PUBLIC SPIRIT

THE book of Esther is not, I should think, one that is much read, although the story it tells is one of great interest.

It belongs to that period of Biblical history when the Jews, in exile from their own land, were scattered over the countries of the far East; and the particular spot in which the plot of the book is laid is Shushan, the capital of the kingdom of Persia.

Esther was an orphan Jewess, brought up by a relative of the name of Mordecai; and, by what might be called an extraordinary stroke of luck, but was really a wise pre-arrangement of Providence, she became the queen of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch.

About the same time as her elevation to this dignity took place, there rose to the head of affairs in Persia—to the place next the king

—one Haman, whose star was destined to come into fatal collision with hers. Through a difference with Mordecai, he conceived a deadly hatred against the whole Jewish race, and, through his influence with Ahasuerus, he procured the passing of an imperial edict, by which the Jews were doomed to extermination on a certain day.

This of course gave rise to extreme consternation among the Jews. As the book itself says, "in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

The distress, however, culminated in the mind of Mordecai. It was the ill-will which Haman had conceived against him that lay at the root of the royal edict; and therefore he felt himself to be, in a sense, the cause of his people's danger.

His mind was accordingly roused to devise some means of averting the threatened peril; and, after pondering it every way, he arrived

at the conclusion that in Esther lay the only hope. He succeeded in getting information conveyed to her, inside the palace, of the posture of affairs, and implored her to use her influence with the king on behalf of her people.

Esther sent back word that there was an almost hopeless difficulty in the way. It was the law of the palace that, on pain of death, no woman, not even his wife, should approach the king unbidden. It was true that those were exempted from this penalty to whom the king, at their approach, held out the golden sceptre; but events had recently happened which rendered it extremely unlikely that the king would be disposed to overlook anything which might appear an infringement of his rights.

To this, Mordecai replied by repeating his entreaty; and, rising to a strain of truly prophetic earnestness, he added the words: "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but

thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kindgom for such a time as this?"

It was a sublime appeal, and it was effectual. Esther returned answer to Mordecai to gather all the Jews in the city to fast and pray for the success of her adventure. "I also," she added, "and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in to the king, which is not according to the law: and, if I perish, I perish."

Her heroic resolution was carried out, and it met with the reward which it deserved. The king, at her approach, held out to her the sceptre of good-will, and promised to give her whatever petition she might ask. She asked the life of her people, and thus became the saviour of a nation, while Haman, her adversary, whose wicked plot was laid bare, came to an ignominious end.

But let us return to the prophetic message with which Mordecai summoned her to the

great attempt, for there is in it a lesson for ourselves. It sets before us three weighty principles:—

I. God's cause is independent of our assistance.

"If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time," said Mordecai, "then shall there arise enlargement and deliverance to the Jews from another place."

How was he so sure of this? He had pondered with almost mortal anxiety to find some way of escape, and Esther's attempt seemed the only opening. Yet he tells her that, even if she should decline to do anything, deliverance would arise from another quarter. How did he know?

Evidently he had drunk deeply of the spirit of the history of Israel. Israel was the people of God; it was the possessor of the promises of God, which had not reached their fulfilment; and sooner could the pillars of the heavens fall than these be broken. Morde-

cai believed that God watched over Israel night and day; many a time had He delivered her, when everything appeared desperate and the help of man had utterly failed; and the record of God's faithfulness in the past gave the assurance that in some way of His own He would prevent the extinction of His people.

This was a noble attitude of mind; and it is one which we should seek to cultivate in reference to the cause of Christ. That cause is not dependent on any man; it will brook no man's patronage, however important he may be. If we will assist it, our help will be welcome; but, if not, it can get on without us. We ought to take humble views of our own contributions to it, but very high views of the cause itself.

If religion is real at all, then it is the greatest and most permanent of all realities. If Christ's own words are true, then it is no limited or hesitating loyalty we owe Him. His cause has the omnipotence of God behind it. God has promised Him the heathen for

His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, and, whoever helps and whoever hinders, the word of the Most High shall not be broken.

If, indeed, we have identified ourselves with the cause of Christ, our hearts must move in sympathy with its successes and its failures.

We shall tremble for the ark of God. But it is quite possible to allow our hearts to tremble for it too much. Never forget that it is God's ark, and that He will take care of it. Now and then, at some Eminent Association, or in Legislative Halls, or in some other place where the famous or at least the notorious congregate, there is a word spoken in favor of Christ and Christianity; and immediately it is taken up in pulpits and on platforms; it is reiterated in religious newspapers and periodicals; and there is among a certain class of Christians a flutter of congratulation, as if the utterance of the great man had made all the foundations secure. Such snapping up of the crumbs of patronage is contemptible; and the weak people who go into those ecstasies

are the very same who quake, as if all the foundations were destroyed, when an attack on religion is made by some clever man.

Ours is an age of majorities. We grow up under the impresssion, which is borne in on us from every side, that, if the opinion of the majority has declared itself, that which it has declared for must prevail, and that which it has declared against must disappear. It may be a good enough doctrine in some things; but there are important limits to its application. There are things which do not submit themselves to the judgment of the many or the few. Rather they judge all critics. Do the judges approve of them? Then it is well for the judges; but, if not, they persist all the same. One man, with truth and the promise of God at his back, is stronger than an opposing world. Not unfrequently has this been the predicament in which the cause of Christ has found itself. It has come through crises, when persecution has tried to exterminate it with fire and sword. It has passed through periods of scepticism, when learning

and cleverness have fancied that they had blown it away as an exploded superstition. Men have had to stand up for it single-handed against principalities and powers; but, with it at their back, they have been stronger than all that were against them; as one in such circumstances sang,—

"God's Word, for all their craft and force,
One moment shall not linger,
But, spite of hell, shall have its course—
'Tis written by his finger.

And, though they take our life,
Goods, honor, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small.
These things shall perish all,
The City of God remaineth."

II. We are not independent of God's cause.

"If," said Mordecai to Esther, "thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but," he added, "thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Such was the penalty which would follow if, through self-interest, she

held back from the service to which he was calling her.

One reason there was which might have tempted Esther to do nothing: she was not known to be a Jewess. We are expressly told so in the narrative. Mordecai and she, at the time of her marriage, had considered it judicious to conceal her nationality. Although, therefore, a massacre of the Jews had taken place, she might have hoped to escape. She had a further protection in the fact that she was an inmate of the palace and the wife of Ahasuerus. What assassin would dare to enter the precincts? Had Esther been disposed to consider only her own safety, instead of, in the spirit of piety and patriotism, thinking of her people, these arguments might have presented themselves to her mind. But Mordecai interposed between her and all such refuges of lies by assuring her that, if the Jews were massacred, she and her father's house would perish with the rest. He may have been led to this conclusion by his knowledge of Haman, whose malignity, once hav-

ing tasted blood, would seek out its victims in the very last hiding-places. But, more likely, he spoke in the spirit of inspiration; which had revealed to him that, if she did nothing for the cause of God's people she would lose her life for it.

We cannot hold back from Christ's cause with impunity. It can do without us, but we cannot do without it. "Whosoever will save his life," said our Lord, "shall lose it." If religion is a reality, to live without it is to suppress and ultimately to destroy the most sacred portion of our own being. It is a kind of suicide, or at least a mutilation. If it is possible for man to enjoy in this life intimacy and fellowship with God, then to live without God is to renounce the profoundest and most influential experience which life contains. If Jesus Christ is the central figure in history, and if the movement which He set agoing is the central current of history, then to be dissociated from His aims is to be a cipher, or perhaps even a minus quantity, in the sum of good. It may, indeed, in the meantime,

facilitate our own pleasure, and it may clear the way for the pursuit of our personal ambitions; but, when from the end of life we look back on our career, will it satisfy us to remember the number of pleasant sensations we have had, if we have to confess to ourselves that we are dying without having contributed anything to the real progress of mankind, and without ever having seen the real glory of the world?

And then, when from that solemn position we turn our faces the other way—not to look back on our earthly career, but to look forward into eternity—will it not be still more evident that we have lost our life? If there be any truth in Christ's own sayings, He is the first figure we shall meet as we enter eternity; and to those who have lived for themselves, and not for Him, He will say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink." In the great day when the Son of man comes forth, in the glory of His Father, and, standing on the mount of God, unfurls the banner of sal-

vation, we shall all wish to press to His side and be identified with Him. But He will only acknowledge us then if we are drawn to His side by motions of loyalty and generosity now—now, when He goes through the streets and highways of the world hungry and thirsty, sick and naked and despised. "If any man confess Me before men, him will I also confess before the Father and the holy angels; but, if any man deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father and the holy angels."

III. Christ's cause offers the noblest employment for our gifts.

Powerful as were the opening portions of Mordecai's appeal, it seems to me it must have been the closing sentence which decided Esther: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

There had been something very remarkable in Esther's career. She, an exile, an orphan,

a Jewess, had become queen of a realm stretching from India to Ethiopia. To a mature mind it might have been natural to ask, for what purpose Providence had allotted her so singular a fortune. But to herself, probably, this question had never, up to this point, occurred. She had entered the lists to compete for the prize of beauty, and she had won it. This opened up to her a position of dazzling magnificence and a future of boundless enjoyment; and, with the uncloyed appetite of youth, she entered on her heritage, taking everything as a matter of course and as the natural tribute to her gifts.

Now, however, a totally different view of the case was presented to her mind. What if all this had happened to her, not for her own glory and enjoyment at all, but to put her in the position of being the saviour of a nation? This thought transfigured Esther. It changed her from a light-headed and light-hearted girl into a heroine. She regarded herself no more as the mistress of a thousand pleasures, who existed for the purpose of be-

ing waited on by hundreds of servitors, but as an instrument in the hands of God for doing a great work for the sake of others.

We all, I suppose, begin like Esther. We are the centre of all things to ourselves; our happiness is the supreme end for which all other persons and things ought to be conspiring. We are proud of our abilities, and eager to shine and command admiration. Perhaps, like Esther, we are brought by circumstances into competition with others, and the verdict of our superiors and our equals confirms the estimate of our powers which we have secretly formed ourselves. The prizes of life glitter ahead of us; we feel confident that we can win them; and we are hungry to taste as many pleasures as we can.

But it is a transfiguring moment when the thought first penetrates a man that perhaps this is not the purpose for which he has received his gifts at all—when the image of humanity rises up before him, in its helplessness and misery, appealing to him, as the weak appeal to the strong; when his country rises before

him, as an august and lovable mother, and demands the services of her child; when the image of Christ rises before him and, pointing to His cause struggling with the forces of evil but heading towards a glorious and not uncertain goal, asks him to lend it his strength —when a man ceases to be the most important object in the world to himself, and sees, outside, an object which makes him forget himself and irresistibly draws him on.

This object rose before Esther's eyes in the most vivid and affecting shape. She saw the sword of the assassin at the throat of a nation, and she was summoned to the rescue. Such a time as this could not but evoke the energy of a nature in which any spark of heroism was hidden.

Such crises occur but seldom; yet no time is without its own pathos and its call for patriotic and self-sacrificing work. Certainly ours is not. The wonderful progress of science in the last two generations has supplied means for helping the world such as have never existed before. The problem of

the degraded and disinherited is pressing on the attention of intelligent minds with an urgency which cannot be disregarded. It is intolerable to think that a noble population like ours should forever lie sodden and stupified, as it now does, beneath a curse like drunkenness; and events are rapidly maturing for a great change. The heathen world is opening everywhere to the influences of the gospel. And perhaps the most significant of all the signs of the times is the conviction, which is spreading in many different sections of the community, that the average of Christian living is miserably below the standard of the New Testament, and that a far broader, manlier, more courageous and open-eyed style of Christianity is both possible and necessary.

This call saved Esther, for it smote down and annihilated in her the instincts of selfish pleasure, and brought up to the surface all the noble elements of her charcater; and the consequence was, that instead of living and dying as the puppet of an Oriental despot, she now survives through all the centuries as one

of those figures from whom noble deeds draw their inspiration.

The same call comes now to you. May it have a like result! Only let me add this one thing. If you would rise in response to this call, do not neglect preparation for the career to which it invites you. Knowledge is the armour of light in which the battles of progress must be won; and, the more closely this armour is fitted on in the years of study, the more ease will there be in your movements and the more force in your blows by-and-bye. Someone has said that ours is an age when everyone wishes to reform the world, but no one thinks of reforming himslf. We must begin with ourselves. Are we to have aught to give the world? Then we must first have received it. Life for God in public is a mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, unless it is balanced by life with God in secret. And, finally, it makes a great difference whether we are going out, in a kind of social knight-errantry, to live for humanity of our own motion or whether we have met with Jesus

Christ in secret, and go forth with His commission and promise at our back, and with His love and inspiration in our souls.

TEMPTATION

I Cor. x;13.—"THERE HATH NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MEN: BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YE ARE ABLE; BUT WILL WITH TEMPTATION ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT."

VI

TEMPTATION

ONCE, when I was going to address a gathering of young men, I asked a friend what I should speak to them about. His answer was: There is only one subject worth speaking to young men about; and that is temptation.

Of course he did not mean this literally: he only meant to emphasize the importance of this subject. Was he not right? You remember, in the story of the Garden of Eden, where the tree which represented temptation stood? It stood in the midst of the garden —just at the point where all the walks converged, where Adam and Eve had to pass it every day. This is a parable of human life. We are out of Paradise now; but the tree of temptation still stands in our life where it stood then—in the midst; where all the roads

meet; where we must pass it every day—and every man's weal or woe depends on the attitude to it which he takes up.

There are six attitudes in any of which we may stand to temptation—first, we may be tempted; second, we may have fallen before temptation; third, we may be tempting others; or fourth, we may be successfully resisting temptation; fifth, we may have outlived temptation; sixth, we may be assisting others to overcome their temptations.

As I should like these six attitudes to be remembered, let me give them names; and these I will borrow from the politics of the Continent of Europe. Any of you who may glance at times into the politics of France or Germany will be aware that in their legislative assemblies there prevails a more minute division into parties, or groups as they are called, than we are accustomed to. In your politics you are content with two great historical parties—Republicans and Democrats; at least you used to be; I do not exactly know how many parties there are now; I had bet-

ter, however, not enter into that investigation. But, as I have said, in Continental parliaments the members are divided into groups. You read of the Group of the Left-centre, the Group of the Left, the Group of the Extreme-left; the Group of the Right-centre, the Group of the Right, and the Group of the Extreme-right. I do not pretend that even these are all; but I will take these as the six names I need for characterizing the six attitudes in which men may stand to temptation.

On the left there are three—first, the Group of the Left-centre, by which I mean those who are being tempted; second, the Group of the Left, by which are meant those who have fallen before temptation; third, the Group of the Extreme-left, or those who are tempters of others. And on the right there are three groups—the fourth group, that of the Right-centre, containing those who are successfully resisting temptation; the fifth, the Group of the Right, or those who have outlived their temptations; and the sixth and

last, the Group of the Extreme-right, that is to say, those who are helping others to resist their temptations.

Let me run rapidly over these six groups.

I. THE GROUP OF THE LEFT-CENTRE OR THOSE WHO ARE BEING TEMPTED.

With this one I begin; because we have all been in it. Whether we have been in the other groups or not, we have all been in this one: we have all been tempted. One of the first things we were told when we were quite young was that we should be tempted—that we should have to beware of evil companions; and there is not one of us in whose case this prediction has not come true.

There is, indeed, no greater mystery of providence than to understand the unequal proportions in which temptation is distributed. Some are comparatively little tempted; others are thrown into a fiery furnace of it seven times heated. There are in the world sheltered situations in which a man may be com-

pared to a ship in the harbor, where the waves may sometimes heave a little, but a real storm never comes; there are other men like the vessel which has to sail the high seas and face the full force of the tempest. Many here must know well what this means. Perhaps you know it so well that you feel inclined to say to me, Preacher, you know nothing about it; if you had to live where we live —if you had to associate with the companions whom we have to work with, and hear the kind of language which we have to listen to every hour of the day—you would know better the truth of what you are saying. Do not be too sure of that. Perhaps I know as well about it as you do. Perhaps my library is as dangerous a place for me as your workshop is for you. Solitude has its temptations as well as society. St. Anthony, before his conversion, was a gay and fast young man of Alexandria; and, when he was converted, he found the temptations of the city so intolerable that he fled into the Egyptian desert and became a hermit; but he afterwards con-

fessed that the temptations of a cell in the wilderness were worse than those of the city. It would not be safe to exchange our temptations for those of another man; every one has his own.

I believe, further, that every man has his own tempter or temptress. Every man on his joureny through life meets with some one who deliberately tries to ruin him. Have you met your tempter yet? Perhaps he is sitting by your side at this moment. Perhaps it is some one in whose society you delight to be, and of whose acquaintance you are proud; but the day may come when you will curse the hour in which you ever saw that face. Some of us, looking back, can remember well who our tempter was; and we tremble yet, sometimes, as we remember how nearly we were over the precipice.

One of the chief powers of temptation is the power of surprise. It comes when you are not looking for it; it comes from the person and from the quarter you least suspect. The day dawns which is to be the decisive

one in our life; but it looks like any other day. No bell rings in the sky to give warning that the hour of destiny has come. But the good angel that watches over us is waiting and trembling. The fiery moment arrives; do we stand; do we fall? Oh, if we fall, that good angel goes flying away to heaven, crying, Fallen, fallen, fallen!

II. The Group of the Left or those who have fallen before temptation.

Though I do not know this audience, I know human nature well enough to be certain that there are some hearing me who are whispering sadly in their hearts, This is the group I belong to: I have fallen before temptation; it may not be known; it may not even be suspected; but it is true.

To such I bear a message of hope to-day.

The great tempter of men has two lies with which he plies us at two different stages. Before we have fallen, he tells us that one fall does not matter: it is a trifle; we can easily recover ourselves again. And, after we have

fallen, he tells us that it is hopeless: we are given over to sin, and need not attempt to rise.

Both are false.

It is a terrible falsehood to say that to fall once does not matter. Even by one fall there is something lost that can never be recovered again. It is like the breaking of an infinitely precious vessel, which may be mended, but will never be again as if it had not been broken. And, besides, one fall leads to others; it is like going upon very slippery ice on the face of a hill; even in the attempt to rise you are carried away again further than ever. Moreover, we give others a hold over us. If we have not sinned alone, to have sinned once involves a tacit pledge that we will sin again; and it is often almost impossible to get out of such a false position. God keep us from believing the devil's lie, that to fall once does not matter.

But then, if we have fallen, he plies us with the other lie: It is of no use to attempt to rise; you cannot overcome your besetting sin.

But this is falser still. To those who feel themselves fallen I come, in Christ's name, to say, Yes, you may rise. If we could ascend to heaven to-day and scan the ranks of the blessed, should we not find multitudes among them who were once sunk low as man can fall? But they are washed, they are justified, they are sanctified, in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And so may you be.

It is, I know, a doctrine which may be abused; but I will not scruple to preach it to those who are fallen and sighing for deliverance. St. Augustine says that we may out of our dead sins make stepping-stones to rise to the heights of perfection. What did he mean by that? He meant that the memory of our falls may breed in us such a humility, such a distrust of self, such a constant clinging to Christ as we never could have had if we had not fallen.

Does not the Scripture itself go even further? David fell—deep as man can fall; but what does he say in that great fifty-first Psalm, in

which he confesses his sin? Anticipating forgiveness, he says:

> Then will I teach Thy ways unto
> Those that transgressors be,
> And those that sinners are, shall then
> Be turned unto Thee.

And what did our Lord Himself say to St. Peter about his fall? "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." A man may derive stength to give to others from having fallen. He may have a sympathy with the erring; he may be able to describe the steps by which to rise, as no other can. Thus, by God's marvelous grace, out of the eater may come forth meat, and out of the strong may come forth sweetness.

III. The Group of the Extreme Left or those who are tempters of others.

These three groups on the left form three stages of a natural descent. First, tempted; secondly, fallen; then, if we have fallen, we tempt others to fall.

This is quite natural. If we are down ourselves, we try to get others down beside us.

There is a satisfaction in it. To a soul that has become black a soul that is still white is an offence. It is said of some, "They rest not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away, except they cause some to fall." There is nothing else, I think, in human nature so diabolical as the delight which the wicked feel in making othes like themselves. Have you never seen it? Have you never seen a group of evil-doers deliberately set themselves to ruin a new-comer, scoffing at his innocence and enticing him to their orgies? And, when they succeeded, they rejoiced over his fall as if they had won a great triumph. So low can human nature sink.

Sometimes it may be self-interest that makes man a tempter. The sin of another may be necessary to secure some end of his own. The dishonest merchant, for his own gain, undermines the honesty of his apprentice; the employer, making haste to be rich, tempts his employees to break the Sabbath; the tyrannical landlord forces his tenants to

vote against their conscience. Why, there are trades which flourish on other people's sins.

But perhaps the commonest way to become a tempter is through thoughtlessness. I protest, we have no pity for each other's souls. We trample about amongst these most brittle and infinitely precious things, as if they were common wear; and we tempt one another and ruin one another without even being aware of it. Perhaps, indeed, no one who goes to the place of woe goes there alone; perhaps every one takes at least one with him. I hear it said nowadays that the fear of hell no longer moves men's minds; and that preachers ought no longer to make use of it as a motive in religion. Well, I confess, I fear it myself; it is a motive still to me. But I will tell you what I fear ten times more. What! is there anything which a man can fear ten times more than the fire that never shall be quenched? Yes! it is to meet there any one who will say, You have brought me here; you were my tempter; and but for you

I might never have come to this place of torment. God forbid that this should ever be said to me by any one. Will it be said to any of you?

But now let us turn away from this side of our subject and look at the bright side—at the three groups on the Right.

IV. The Group of the Right-centre, or those who are those who are successfully resisting temptation.

Not very long ago a letter chanced to come under my eye. It was written by a young man attending one of the great English universities. One day two or three fellow-students had come into his rooms and asked him to join them in some amusement of a questionable kind, which they were contemplating. On the spur of the moment he promised; but, when they had gone, he thought what his parents would say, if they knew. It was a godly home he belonged to and a very happy one, in which the children were bound to the parents in such a way that

they kept no secrets from them. He thought of his home, and he had doubts whether what he had promised to do might not cause pain there. He was afraid it would; and he promptly and frankly went and told his companions that his engagement was off till he should inquire. The letter I saw was the inquiry. It affected me deeply to read it; for it was easy to understand how much manliness was required to do that which might be interpreted as unmanly.

The memory of that man's home came to him in the hour of temptation and made him strong to resist. I wonder this influence does not prove a rescuing power oftener than it does. Young men, when you are tempted, think of home. I have been a minister away in a provincial town; and, I think, if you could realize the effect produced by the news coming from the city of a son fallen and disgraced—if you could realize the mother's terror, and the father's stricken frame, and the silent, tearful circle, as I have seen them—it would make you fling the cup of temptation

from your lips, however persuasive was the hand that proffered it.

Yet this will not always be a strong enough motive in the struggle with temptation. There will come times, when you are tempted to great sin which will appear to you absolutely safe from discovery and not likely to inflict the slightest injury on your fortunes. In such circumstances nothing will sustain you, if you do not respect your own nature and stand in awe of your own conscience. Nay, even this is not enough; the only effective defence is that of one who was surely tempted in this very way, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

There are secret battles fought and victories won on this ground, never heard of on earth, but essentially more glorious than many victories which are trumpeted far and wide by the breath of fame. There is more of courage and manhood needed for them than for walking up to the cannon'smouth. Walking up to the cannon's mouth! Many a soldier could do that who could not say No to two or three

companions pressing him to enter the canteen. Not long ago I was speaking to a soldier who told me that many a time in the barracks he was the only man to go down on his knees out of twenty or thirty; and he did it among showers of oaths and derision. Do you think walking up to the cannon's mouth would have been difficult to that man? Such victories have no record on earth; but be sure of this, they are widely heard of in heaven, and there is One there who will not forget them.

V. The Group of the Right or those who have outlived their temptations.

On this point I do not mean to dwell; but I should like at least to mention it, as there is contained in it a great encouragement to some who may be enduring the very hottest fires of temptation. Perhaps your situation is so intolerable that you often say, I cannot stand this much longer; if it lasts as it is, I must fall—"One day I shall fall into the hands of Saul."

No, you will not. I bid you take courage; and as one encouragement I say, you will yet outlive your temptation.

That which is a temptation at one period of life may be no temptation at all at another. To a child there may be an irresistible temptation in a sweetmeat which a man would take a good deal to touch; and some of the temptations which are now the most painful to you will in time be as completely outlived. God may lift you, by some turn of providence, out of the position where your temptation lies; or the person from whom you chiefly suffer may be removed from your neighborhood. The unholy fire of passion, which now you must struggle to keep out of your heart, may, through the mercy of God who setteth men in families, be burnt away and replaced by the holy fire of love burning on the altar of a virtuous home. The laughter and scorn which you may now be bearing for your Christian profession will, if you only have patience, be changed into respect and veneration; for even the ungodly are forced at last to do honor to a consistent Christian life.

In these and other ways, if you only have patience, you will outlive temptation; though I do not suppose we shall ever in this world be entirely out of its reach, or be beyond the need of these two admonitions: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," and, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

VI. The Group of the Extreme Right or those who are assisting others to overcome temptation.

You see, on the Right there is an upward progress, as on the Left there was a downward one. The first step is to be successfully resisting temptation; a higher one is to have outlived temptation; the highest of all is to be helping others to resist it; though I do not say that this must be the chronological order. It is the order of honor.

This group of the Extreme-right is the exact opposite of the group of the Extreme-left. Those in the latter group are tempting others to fall; those in this one are encouraging and

aiding others to stand fast. No man ought to be satisfied till he is in this noble goup.

There are many ways in which we may assist others with their temptations. A big hearted man will often be doing so without being aware of it. His very presence, his attractive manhood, his massive character act as an encouragement to younger men and hold them up. I do not know anything so much to be coveted as in old age to have men coming to say, Your example, your presence, your sympathy were like a protecting arm put round my stumbling youth and helped me over the perilous years. My brothers, if a few men can honestly say this to us in the future, will it not be better than Greek and Roman fame?

Many are helping the young against their temptations by providing them with means of spending their leisure innocently and profitably. Our leisure time is the problem. Whilst we are at work, there is not so much fear of us; but it is in the hours of leisure—the hours between work and sleep—that

temptation finds men, and they are lost; and therefore I say, there is no more Christian work than providing men with opportunities of spending leisure profitably.

But by far the best way to help men with their temptations is to bring them to Christ. It may be of some service to a man if, in the time of trial, I put round him the sympathetic arm of a brother; but it is infinitely better if I can get him to allow Christ to put round him His strong arm. This is the effectual defence; and no other can be really depended on.

I think I have been speaking to your hearts and to your experience. This is not a subject up in the air; it is our very life. Let me say a final word about how to deal with temptation.

How are you dealing with your own? There are two ways, which may be called the Method of Resistance and the Method of Counter-Attraction. I have seen them illustrated by two legends of the ancient Greek mythology; and with these I will close.

The one legend is that of Ulysses, the great traveller of those mythical times. Once in his wanderings, it is said, he came to the spot on the southern shore of Italy where the Sirens lived. These were a kind of mermaids, beautiful in person and especially in voice, but malignant in soul. They used to sing on the shore, as ships were passing by, and with their sweet songs allure the mariners to their destruction upon the rocks. But Ulysses was a wise and wily traveller, and was aware of the danger; and he took measures to provide for his safety. Assembling the sailors, he explained the situation, and told them they must pull past the fatal spot for their lives. Then he stuffed their ears with wax, so that they could not hear a sound. His own ears were not stuffed; but he made the sailors bind him hand and foot to the mast. In this trim they reached the place which had been fatal to so many. The Sirens saw them, and came out, and sang their sweetest. The sailors, hearing nothing on account of the wax in their ears, pulled stubbornly on. Ulysses heard,

and was so intoxicated that he would have done anything to reach the shore, but, being bound hand and foot, he could do nothing to influence the direction of the ship. And so they rounded a promontory and the danger was past.

The other story is about the Argonauts, who were sailing to Pontus in search of the Golden Fleece, and had also to pass the same dangerous spot. But in their ship they had with them Orpheus, the great poet and singer of those mythical times. He sang so ravishingly, it was said, that lions and tigers came crouching to his feet, and even rocks and trees followed where he went. And every day he poured his enchanting strains into the ears of the Argonauts. At length they arrived at the dangerous spot, and the Sirens, seeing them, came forth and sang their sweetest. But the Argonauts only laughed at them and passed on. How were they able to do so? It was because the charm of the inferior music had been broken by that which was superior.

These two stories illustrate the two ways

of meeting temptation. The one is the method of restraint, when we keep ourselves from sin by main force, as Ulysses saved himself from the charm which was drawing him; and, of course, this is far better than yielding to temptation. But the other method is the secret of religion. The attraction of temptation is overcome by a counter attraction. The love of Christ in the heart destroys the love of sin, and the new song of salvation enables us to despise the siren-song of temptation and pass it by. That man alone is really safe who, as he sails the seas of life, carries on board the Divine Orpheus, whose heavenly music is daily sounding in his soul.

THE FOUR MEN

I Cor. iv, 3: 4.—"WITH ME IT IS A VERY SMALL THING THAT I SHOULD BE JUDGED OF YOU OR OF MAN'S JUDGMENT; YEA, I JUDGE NOT MINE OWN SELF; FOR I KNOW NOTHING BY MYSELF; YET AM I NOT HEREBY JUSTIFIED; BUT HE THAT JUDGETH ME IS THE LORD.

VII

THE FOUR MEN

AS this text is not perhaps very familiar, I should like to make two or three preliminary remarks upon it.

There is one phrase in it especially which requires explanation, because it is old English and has not at all the meaning which the sound conveys to our ears. This is the phrase "I know nothing by myself." These words suggest to us the idea, I know nothing by my own natural faculties without divine illumination, or some such meaning. But they do not mean anything like this. "By" is old English for "against", and the phrase simply means, "I know nothing against myself." If you read the verses with this alternation, you will see how much more intelligible they become: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or

of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self, for I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

You see, there are four judgments which the apostle feels he is exposed to: first, that of his friends—"judged of you;" secondly, that of the world—"or of man's judgment;" thirdly, his own judgment—"I judge not mine own self;" and, fourthly, God's judgment—"He that judgeth me is the Lord."

And he tells us what estimate he puts on these several judgments. For the first two he cares little—"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." He means to say that he falls back on his own judgment. Yet no, this is not his meaning—"Yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing against myself; yet am I not thereby justified. "But he that judgeth me is the Lord"—this is the verdict which is unerring and final.

You might say that in every man there are four men—

I. The Man the World Sees.

The world looks at each of us and sees a certain image of us. It observes single actions of ours and watches our courses of action, and gradually makes up its mind about our character and conduct as a whole. It takes in a general impression of what we are, and gives it expression in a brief judgment on us. It is a singular thing to reflect on, that, in the town in which we live or the neighborhood were we are known, there is in circulation a general popular opinion about every one of us. It is usually condensed into very terse terms, such as, He is a good man, or, He is a bad man; He is an excellent, able, generous fellow, or, He is a small, narrow-minded creature; He is good-hearted, but there is nothing in him, or, He is very clever, but he knows it. Few for us, perhaps, know the exact phrase in which the mental photograph which the public has taken of us is passed from hand to hand; and for our peace of mind, it may in some cases be just as

well. But there is no doubt that it exists; and this is the first man in each of us—the man the world sees.

II. The Man Seen by the Person Who Knows him Best.

This may be quite a different man from the man the world sees; for every man has two sides—one to face the world with and one to show to the friend of his heart.

I once had a friend. The popular opinion about him was that he was very quiet and rather dull, without ideas, or experience, or character of his own. Such was the man the world saw. But the man I saw was quite a different being—a man of the most genial humor, who could break into conversation the most lively and discursive or the most serious and profound, with a mind richly stored with unusual knowledge, a fertile imagination, and a moral nature which had passed through all the great experiences of the human soul and all the peculiar experiences of our time.

This is not a singular case. There is no one who is another's nearest and dearest who does not sometimes say, The man I know is very different from the man the world knows; people think they know him; but there are heights and depths of which they have no suspicion. Some men, owing to a shy and self-suppressing temperament, are scarcely known to the public at all. They cannot permit themselves to show any feeling, and all their movements in the eyes of others are invincibly awkward. People therefore think them cold and unfeeling. Yet this may be a complete mistake. The most intense and passionate nature may be ice-like or iron-like outside.

There is an old myth of the Greek religion which illustrates this. Luna, the goddess of the moon, is said to have loved a mortal man. As she said across the sky at night in her silver beauty, she looked down at him as at other mortals, and he looked up at her as other mortals did. But, when midnight was past and the world was asleep, he still watch-

ed and looked up at her alone; and then she turned to him that side of her refulgent orb which is always turned away from the world, and disclosed such dazzling splendors as mortal eye had never seen before.

Thus does friend do to friend. Friend can say to friend:

> "There's the world's side of you,
> Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
> There, too, I stand sometimes with them and praise you.
> But the best is when I glide from out them,
> Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
> Come out on the other side,—the novel,
> Silent, silver lights and darks undreampt of,
> Where I hush and bless myself with silence."

But is this second man a better man than the first? Let us hope, generally so. Surely most men appear bigger, better, more generous and tender to the one who knows them best than to the outside world. Surely most of us have some one who would passionately say, He is a truer man, and his life is a truer life, than the public knows. Yet it is not always so. Oh the wretched man who is more thought of in public than he is at home;

whose friend knows that the brilliant qualities for which he has a reputation in public are mere tinsel and trickery; whose wife and family know that the sanctity he gets credit for is mere hypocrisy. I fear many a house has such a skeleton in the cupboard. He who is a model of courtesy in public may be a tyrant at home; or those who know him best may be acquainted with concealed habits of his life or dark passages of his history which would ruin him if they came to the public ear.

III. The Man Seen by Himself.

This is a very different man from either the first or second. The man I know myself to be is by no means the same as that seen by the world or even that seen by my closest friend.

For one thing, each man knows his own history far better than it can be known by anyone else. The public see a few of a man's deeds and hear a few of his words; and a bosom friend is acquainted with a few more. But the whole current of his actions from the

beginning, the stream of his words, the whole torrent of his thoughts and feelings, no eye can see but his own.

Again, who knows the motives of a man's actions except himself? Have you never been ashamed to receive praise for a deed supposed to be generous or pious, which you yourself knew to have sprung from a selfish root? and, on the other hand, who has not had his conduct ascribed sometimes to dark or petty motives which, he is conscious, have never had a place in his heart.

The truth is, there is amazingly little of our inmost life which comes out in even the closest intercourse. The poet never can put on paper the most exquisite of the melodies which have sung themselves within him, and he looks in despair on the few tame and tuneless lines which are all he can recover of the fiery and winged conceptions of his imagination. The orator in his most successful hour only feebly bodies forth the thoughts which have almost burst the walls of his soul in secret, and which he has desired to shout

to all the winds of heaven. The most heavenly madonnas of Raphael and the most lurid scenes of Rubens were only faint copies of the pictures of the artists' daydreams. Who that has ever learned to think at all has not sometimes been visited with swift, immeasurable glimpses and momentary intuitions of truth which he would attempt in vain to communicate to others? The very brightest things of the fancy and the profoundest things of the intellect, the last intensity of love and the most exquisite sensitiveness of pity, the most momentous decisions of the will and the darkest things of conscience belong entirely to an inner and secret world of self-knowledge with which no stranger, or even friend, intermeddleth.

But is this third man a better or a worse than the first and second? Well, I think, both a better and a worse.

In some respects we all, perhaps, know ourselves to be better than we are supposed to be. As I have said, there are bright visitations in the mind which you could not com-

municate to another if you tried. Then there are some of the best things which you dare not speak of; humility, for example, spoken of, is humility no more. What religious man can describe the tragic moments when his soul lies prostrate and penitent before God, or the golden moments when he is closest to the Saviour? Such things are soiled by fingering. Besides, in all highly toned minds there is a modesty about explanations; and even in the frankest friendship there is many a word, many an act, which we know is misinterpreted to our disadvantage, but which we cannot explain.

But even the worst, perhaps, have more good in them than would be believed. There are wholesome bits in the most abandoned soul; there are sparks smouldering in the heap of ashes. Sometimes the outcast is visited with memories of innocence; sometimes the demoralized will attempts to rise; sometimes he weeps a few tears, hastily brushed away, for the lost past; sometimes he does a kind act which he would be ashamed to show.

Yes, all men know themselves to be, in some respects, better than they are supposed to be. But do we not also know ourselves to be worse? What do you say—not with the tongue with which you would speak to another, but with that tongue with which the soul speaks to itself? Have you never said to yourself, If people only knew me as I know myself, they would scorn me, if my friend knew me as I really am, he would be my friend no more? Away back in your life, are there not hours about which you neither could, would nor should speak? Is there ever a day but there pass through your mind thoughts of pettiness and vanity, movements of covetousness, envy and pride, perhaps dark doubts and blasphemies? Have you no secret habits and sinful inclinations and desires which dare not see the light?

We are both better and worse than others think. But, on the whole, when the two sides are weighed against each other, to which does the balance incline? Am I taking a gloomy view of human nature if I say, that a

every one of us here is miserably self-condemned?

IV. The Man Whom God Sees.

This man is very different from the third. God knows us far better than we know ourselves. I said a little ago, that every one remembers the whole of his own history from the beginning. But this is hardly correct. We forget much. It is only under God's eye that the whole of our past life, inward and outward, in all its unbroken concatenation, lies naked and open. He forgets nothing.

But, besides, He knows the state of our hearts to the bottom, and this no man knows even about himself. God not only knows all the good and evil we have done, but all we are capable of doing. Some of those now hearing me will, before this time next year, do things which, if whispered to them now, would call forth the angry retort: Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing? On the other hand, there are those who will, with any year, perform acts of heroic faith and love

which they would not now believe though a man should show them unto them. We never know what is in us, or what manner of men we are, till the trial comes. The circumstances of our lot, the restraints of home and the habits of the society in which we move, produce virtues in us which are utterly destitute of root. Many a one of the fairest fame and promise in his native place has no suspicion how shallow his character is, till he finds himself in new circumstances, with restraint removed and temptation strong, when his goodness decays like Jonah's gourd and there is a rush of vicious growths from the soil of the heart.

Still another thing which makes the man God sees different from the man we see is that we are prejudiced in our own favor, but He is quite impartial. I have been taking it for granted that each of the men in us that I have described is truer to the reality than the preceding one. And, on the whole, this is correct. Yet not always: the public may sometimes judge a man more truly than his

friends, because the latter are too partial. And who can have any doubt that his friends see defects in his character to which he is himself completely blind? Our self-conceit will sometimes even make us proud of qualities for which we are the pity and laughing-stock of all who know us.

Thus is our own judgment of ourselves distorted by prejudice; but God judges us impartially. I have no doubt that He sees a great deal of good in us which we have never seen in ourselves. Sometimes when a man is humbled in the dust and bitterly condemning himself as vile and worthless, God looks upon that hour as the flower and glory of his life.

Yes, in some respects, God sees in each of us a better man than human eyes may ever have seen; but does He not also see a far worse? What say you? Sometimes I have gone to the brink and looked down into the dark abyss of my own nature, till I reeled back dizzy and horrified. Yet I know that I have never once seen to the bottom. But

He sees everything, and He sees it always. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.

I have been trying to lead you a little down into the depths of self-knowledge; but, if you come a little farther into our text, it will take us deeper into the mystery. Each of us comes under these four judgments; but now, what do we think of them? Which of them are we most concerned about?

There are three ways of regarding them, which I may call the Shallow Way, the Manly Way, and the Apostolic Way.

1. The Shallow Way. A shallow man is deeply anxious about how he looks in the eyes of other men, but little concerned about how he looks in his own eyes or in God's.

I do not say that we ought to be indifferent about what our friends or the public think of us. Nobody but a fool would say that. There are few things more precious than a good name and the esteem of friends; and

the world has prompt and painful means of bringing anyone to his senses who affects to neglect its judgment.

But I do say that he is a shallow man who is more anxious about what he seems to others than about what he knows himself to be. There are writers who, if their books are popular, do not care though they know them to be the fruit of superficial knowledge and insufficient labor. There are workmen who are satisfied if their handiwork can pass for what it pretends to be, though they know themselves that it is only a pretence. And there are plenty of spiritual workmen of the same sort. Do we never pass lightly over our secret sins because we think we are certain that they will never come to the knowledge of others? When a great sin becomes known to the public and ruins a man's reputation and prospects, is it, as a rule, for the sin he grieves or for the consequences?

2. The Manly Way. The manly way is to treat lightly the judgments passed on us by others, but to be anxiously and honorably

sensitive about the judgments which we are compelled to pass on ourselves.

This, I say, will produce a manly character and a noble life. It is not difficult to meet the demands of the world. Its code of morality is mainly negative; all it requires of us is to be respectable. But he who keeps a strict watch upon his own spirit and judges his own outer and inner life conscientiously and intelligently must make great demands upon himself.

He who does so will not need to care very much what others think of him. True worth will shine out sooner or later. He may give offence sometimes and be occasionally misunderstood; but he has only to wait a little and stand his ground. He is not like the miserable slave of conventionality who has constantly to be resorting to mean expedients to hide his defects and make his tinsel look like gold. The workman who cannot bear to let his work out of his hands as long as his own eye can detect a flaw in it will not have to wait long to see it appreciated by others also.

There are few feelings more satisfying than amidst public depreciation and obloquy to fall back on one's own sense of pure motives and right conduct. This, however, is a comparatively easy thing to do; it is a far rarer manliness to acknowledge the faults which one's own eye can detect even when others are applauding, and to pass through all the drama of moral feeling which the conscientious review of our conduct ought to excite, whether others know anything about it or not. This is an experience unknown to the shallow man; it is the manly way.

Yet I will show you a more excellent way—

3. THE APOSTOLIC WAY. This is the way of our text: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." I have heard of a young musical composer who was bringing out his first great composition. As the successive members of the mighty theme were evolved,

the house rang with uncontrollable applause; and, as he stood above the orchestra, hearing his ideas interpreted by perfect executants and feeling the force of his genius passing into the souls of his fellow-men, irrepressible emotion began to swell in his breast. Yet, all the time, he kept his eye fixed on one spot in the audience, where sat a master of his art much greater than himself: and his heart trembled far more at the slightest movement of the master's features than at all the thunders of the crowd.

This is the way to live. After man's judgment and our own judgment, there is another far more august—the judgment of God. It is only the recollection of this which will keep the manliest mind from becoming proud and pharisaical. As, at night, I pass the day's work under review, I can see much to blame; but, when I pass it on to God's hands, I know that His eye will detect a thousand faults where mine has noticed one. And, when I think of having to meet all my past life again, and hear His judgment on it

from the great white throne, I know that I have nothing to depend on but His infinite mercy and the precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin.

I said before, that I was trying to lead you into the mystery of self-knowledge; and we have since penetrated into it a little farther. But let us try, before closing, to get to the very center. These are practical truths, and they are little worth unless they lead to action. Let me show you in a couple of instances how they can be used to solve the deep questions of the soul.

I suppose, the most solemn question which a man can ask himself is this, Am I as yet, in deed and in truth, a Christian? Now, about this there will be four opinions—the opinion of the world, the opinion of friends, your own opinion, and the judgment of God. There is, first, the opinion of the world. We know what this is likely to be. We know how wide and how vague its opinion is about

what makes a Christian. The name is a mere title of courtesy which everyone may claim. Then, secondly, there is the opinion of your friends. What is their opinion? It may be a mere echo of the opinion of the world; or it may be at the other extreme: they may refuse you the name, unless you are able to pronounce the shibboleth of some narrow coterie. What is your own opinion? What, as far as you can make it out from His Word, is the judgment of God?

And now, which of these opinions are you going by? Are you satisfied if you simply come up to the world's estimate and can pass muster in its rough judgment? We are hard ridden by conventionalism in most parts of life; but surely a man is lost altogether if he allows conventionalism to come into this holy of holies of his personality. Oh shallow, shallow, shallow the man who, on this question of destiny is satisfied with any judgment except that which he has anxiously and deliberately arrived at in the presence of God!

The other question which I wish to be tried

by the method of our text is not less important. ´ Suppose any man feels that the secret answer given in his soul to the first question must be in the negative, then this other question arises, Ought I to become a Christian in deed and in truth? And on this also there are four judgments. The first is that of the world; and what is it? We all know. The world laughs at the suggestion; You a Christian! at your age! it is absurd; enjoy yourself; you can begin to think of religion when you are too old to think of anything else, Then, secondly, there is the opinion of your friends. What is it? An echo perhaps of the world's. Perhaps you even know that you would have to endure bitter persecution if in a real or earnest sense you became a Christian. Or perhaps it is the other way; perhaps you well know that this is the daily wish and prayer of all the hearts which truly love you. Then, thirdly there is your own judgment. What is it? What are all the sane, great and sacred voices within you saying on the point? And, fourthly, you know what is God's judgment.

Now, which of those judgments are you going by? Is the voice of the world to prevail, or will you rise up in the strength of a man and say, In God's name I walk henceforth only in the way in which all the sacred things I know, within and without, are constraining me to go; from this very hour I am Christ's, wholly Christ's, and Christ's forever?

YOUTH AND AGE

"Both young men and maidens; old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord."—Psalm cxlviii. 12.

VIII.

YOUTH AND AGE.

A SCOTCH professor, addressing an academic audience in one of the eastern states, warned his hearers against cant. At the close, questions were invited, and one of the students asked the professor, "What is cant?" "There is a kind of religion," was the reply, "which is natural to an old woman, and there is another which is natural to a young man; but, if the young man professes to have the religion of the old woman, that is cant."

To some minds the form of this answer will doubtless appear undignified or even irreverent; and, although it might be defended on the ground of its being spoken on the spur of the moment and in reply to an irritating question, we will not defend it. Let the form go. But the substance we will not let go; for there is wisdom in it. It means that

the young have special needs of their own, which the Gospel must recognize, if it is to be of any use to them; and the mature or aged, in like manner, have their own special wants, which cannot be met by the provision made for the young, but can only be satisfied by a Gospel which understands and sympathizes with them.

No doubt it might be said that the religious wants of all, old and young, are alike—they all need the pardon of sin, the new heart and the promise of heaven; and for all alike there is the same Saviour. This is true; but, great truth though it be, it is only half the truth. There is another half, and it is this: Every season of life has its own necessities, its own sorrows, its own joys and aspirations; and it is by the delicate appreciation of these in every case, and by the possession of resources ample enough to meet them all, that the Gospel proves itself to be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Christ has a voice and a message for each separate human soul in the precise stage of

its history at which He finds it, and it is by the nice adaptation of His sympathy to the condition of everyone that He is able, as He said, to draw all men to Himself.

I. For the young He has the Gospel of Living; for the old the Gospel of Dying.

There is a gospel of dying; and it is well for us that there is, for we have all to die. When the solemn hour arrives in which we must leave this world and go to another, to face the great white throne, happy will it be for us if we know the secret which is able to transmute that mortal defeat into the greatest of all victories. There is no logic more unanswerable than that which says to us, "We must all die and, no man can tell how soon his own turn may come; therefore we ought to be ready; it is the height of folly to live unprepared, when we may die at any moment."

No wonder preachers make ample use of this logic, for to them death is an ever-present reality. Every week they are moving

among the sick and dying; every other day they follow the dead to their long home. Death becomes to them an overmastering motive. It is so also to those into whose family circle the bolt of death has fallen. A considerable proportion of those who have passed middle life have, by repeated experiences, been made acquainted with death. If you speak to them about it, you awaken a hundred tragic and tender memories, every one of which constrains them to prepare to meet their God. Even when we are comparatively young, this may become the most powerful of all motives, if the finger of death has touched one who is so near to us as to be part of ourselves. In this way St. Augustine was converted through the death of his friend; Luther was driven into the convent by a flash of lightning cutting down a companion at his side; and in hundreds of cases the temporal death of one has become life eternal to another.

But, until death thus lays its cold finger on our own flesh, so to speak, it is strangely un

real to us, and the best logic, reasoning from it, produces almost no impression. To many of the young, death is unthinkable; the thought of it will not stick to their minds, though they try. As the wing of the sea-fowl is provided with a natural unguent which enables her to shed the rain, as it falls, and the wave in which she dips, so nature seems to have provided the young with a power of keeping off this thought till the hour of providence strikes.

It is of life the young mind thinks, not of death; and therefore the gospel which appeals to it must be a gospel of life, not a gospel of death. It must mingle with the warm rush of the healthy blood and keep time with the beating of the bounding heart.

But is there not a response to this in the Gospel of Christ? Is it not pre-eminently a gospel of life? There is nothing else about which it is more constantly speaking. It comes not to circumscribe our life, but to intensify and enlarge it; not to devitalize us, but to send an ampler flood of energy through

our veins. "I am come," said Christ, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

II. To the young Christ brings the Gospel of Inspiration; to the old the Gospel of Consolation.

There is consolation in the Gospel; and sorely does the world need it. The successful are few, the disappointed are many. Man lies open to the attacks of misfortune at every point of the compass. His intellect may be able to cleave through the obstructions of fortune and breast the heights of success, when suddenly the body gives way, and the mind, though its own strength is undiminished, has to lag behind in the race, waiting for its frail attendant. Life is little; it is only a single stone at the most we can lay on the rising cairn of the purpose of the world. Life is short; we have scarcely well begun our work when we hear the hammer knocking to warn us that it is time to stop and, to appear before the great Task-master.

Man needs consolation, and the Gospel of Christ gives it. It supplies that which will take the place of worldly losses. When the ground begins to roll round us in the earthquake of change, and the sand to slip away on which we have been standing, it directs us to the Rock which is the same yesterday and to-day and forever. Blessed is he who, when the star of time is sinking in the west, has learned to look to the east for the rising of the day-star of eternity.

These are the consolations of the Gospel; it is full of them, and they are infinitely precious. But they are for the old, or at least the mature, not for the young. Youth is not yet able to receive them, and, if you press them on it, you are offering what it does not want. It wants inspiration, not consolation.

Youth looks round on the world in which it finds itself, and notes its defects with a fresh and inevitable glance. It burns to put them right. It looks on the figures of those who have played their part well in the past and longs to emulate them Its own powers are

still a mysterious, unmeasured set of possibilities; but it longs to measure them against the task of the world—to plunge into the great game of life and make its mark.

Now, has the Gospel no sympathy with this state of mind? I think it has the greatest sympathy with it. Christ taught the individual to realize his dignity as an immortal being; and the life He condemned most severely was that which accomplishes nothing. He Himself, the humble Carpenter of Nazareth, while rejecting the bribe of the kingdoms of the earth, yet aimed at world-wide influence: and He taught His lowly followers to expect to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. One of the commonest religious sentiments of our day is that expressed in the lines of Keble,—

> "The trivial round, the common task
> Can furnish all we ought to ask—
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To lead us daily nearer God."

It is a beautiful and a true sentiment: there is nothing too small to be done to the honor

of God; there is no sphere too humble to be accepted thankfully; no task too trivial for anyone's devotion to whom Providence has assigned it. Yet I venture to say that this sentiment, though true, is not nearly so true, is not nearly so charactristic of Christianity and of the New Testament, as its exact opposite. The prevailing strain of the New Testament is not that there is nothing too small to do in Christ's service, but rather that there is nothing too great to attempt in the name of Christ. The New Testament is from beginning to end a record of how men who were nothing in themselves became princes of thought and action through the inspiration of Christ; and it still comes to the young heart, on the edge of the battle of life, not to cool it with the maxims of prudence, but to tighten its armor and put the sword into its hand, and, breathing into it high aspiration, to send it forth into the struggle, crying, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

III. For the young Christ has the Gospel of Giving; for the old the Gospel of Receiving.

Many would, doubtless, say that religion is all receiving. They feel that they have received so much from Christ, and that what they can give Him is such a trifle in comparison, that nothing should be spoken of in religion except what Christ has done for us. This is the conviction into which we grow more and more with advancing years. We feel more and more the wickedness of the natural heart and the hopelessness of any good thing coming out of us. It is a strange fact—but it is a fact—that, the better people grow, they are the more conscious of their own wickedness; the holiest person is the one readiest to say, I am the chief of sinners. In the same way, those who do most good feel that they are doing nothing: the power they have is not their own; they have nothing that they have not received.

This is the sentiment of the most advanced piety. Yet there is a gospel of giving; and it appeals particularly to the young. Christ

has a cause on earth which can only be carried on by the energy of those who are willing to devote themselves to His service. He needs men and women to think for Him, to plan for Him, to speak and act for Him, to be His brain and heart, His eyes and lips, His hands and feet in the world. He is not here any longer to carry on His cause Himself; He has left it to the charge of those who are willing to act in His name. His cause is the cause of goodness and progress; its aim is to make God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It has all the forces of evil ranged against it; and it has to advance in the face of opposition and scorn. It needs courage, initiative, sacrifice; it needs the lives of men. Christ appeals to every man and says, "Will you give your life to My cause? You could do something to help Me, and I would prize your help. Are you to be part of the opposition which I and My cause have to overcome, fighting passively or actively on the side of evil? There is no neutrality; he that is not with Me is against Me."

This appeal comes home especially to the young. You may live fifty years yet, or more, in the world. Your influence during that time will be a solid contribution either to Christ or to the enemy of Christ; and it will never cease to act as a factor on the one side or the other through all future history. To which side are you going to give it? Can you be harboring the ignoble thought that you may give three-fourths or nine-tenths of life to Christ's enemy, and then come to Him with the poor fraction left over at the last, in the hope of escaping punishment and getting into heaven? This is the meanest kind of religion that the heart of man has ever conceived. Give Him the whole—your life unbroken, your strength of heart and brain and muscle in its prime. There is a work you can do for Him in youth that none can do in old age. Ay, and there is an experience of Him and of His love which only a young heart can enjoy.

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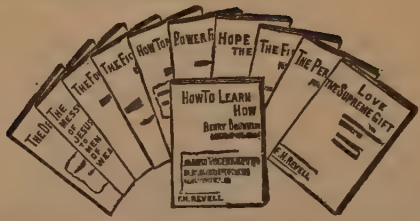

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